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MEMOIRS

OF

A LITERARY VETERAN.

VOL. I.

MEMOIRS

OF

A LITERARY VETERAN;

INCLUDING

SKETCHES AND ANECDOTES

OF

THE MOST DISTINGUISHED LITERARY CHARACTERS
FROM 1794 TO 1849.

BY

R. P. GILLIES.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.
1851.

LONDON :
Printed by SAMUEL BENTLEY and Co.,
Bangor House, Shoe Lane.

PREFACE.

THERE have been very opposite opinions as to the proper style and tone of autobiography, some writers proceeding with evident levity and carelessness, others with grave effort and labour, as if conscious of a solemn responsibility.

Without voting for either, I think it right to observe, that in no part of the following pages did I wish or intend that the tone of their contents should rise above that of table-talk.

I never intended that these volumes should appear in their present state; on the contrary, desired to have the MS. returned to me, with the view of re-constructing and condensing the greater part. But my Publisher, thinking well of the work as it now stands, persuaded me to abandon my views in that respect.

Lastly, I beg to disclaim all pretensions to the honourable title of "Literary Veteran" which my publisher has conferred on me, and against which I pleaded in vain.

R. P. G.

London,
Feb. 25, 1851.

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MEMOIRS

OF

A LITERARY VETERAN.

CHAPTER I.

FASHIONS AND MANNERS OF 1794.—MECHANICAL INVENTIONS.—MACARONIS.—NORTH COUNTRY LAIRDS.—THEIR ECCENTRICITIES. — THE PRINCE OF WALES AND MR. M. HARRIS. — HOSPITALITIES AT BONNYMUNE.

My book is intended chiefly for a record of impressions and feelings arising in the author's mind during his voyage of life, and my earliest remembrances date from the severe winter of 1794. I yet seem vividly to behold the barrier of snow in front of our old country house, and the slide which had been arranged there for my special diversion. I have also some dreamy recollections about travelling in a close carriage, with a high wall of snow on each side, for the roads had been

blocked up, and the cutting was six or eight feet deep in divers places.

As to the fashions and manners of 1794, I can remember that we were then, as now, supremely conceited, or at all events on excellent good terms with ourselves. In the north of Scotland, whence I begin these reminiscences, the "try back" and "stand stock-still" parties were strong; the "hark-forward" aspirants, though become numerous, were yet in a minority. In point of rationality, or discipline of the reasoning faculties, it is almost needless to add that all three were pretty much on a par.

With regard to scientific improvements, comparatively speaking, I fear it must be owned that we were then in a state of doleful ignorance and laughable self-complacency. The present indispensable comforts for winter, such as mackintoshes, respirators, gutta percha, antigropolos, American shoes, and distributive calorifères, were all of them unknown and undreamed of in 1794; the Zetland hose alone forming an item that we could boast of then. I might stake my remainder of life on the hypothesis, that if the late Mr. Jones of the Strand "Light House" could have suddenly emanated on the world in those days, with no other invention than his ordinary lucifer matches, he would either have realized a large fortune, or been condemned

and burnt for sorcery. The latter perhaps is the more probable supposition of the two. Our last *auto da fe* of that refined sort took place, I believe, in Aberdeenshire, about the year 1720, since which date, it is true, the practice had fallen into desuetude; but there is no knowing how much of excitement, suspicion, and alarm, might have been produced in the public mind of 1794, by the sudden achievement of an invention so wonderful and mysterious as that of a lucifer.

Our most ingenious artizans and chemists had laboured to discover convenient means for causing instantaneous light, but in vain! I had once a round morocco leather case, bearing date 1788, and price 1*l.* 18*s.* 6*d.*, containing a phosphorous bottle, a piece of wax candle, and other adjuncts; also a printed parchment of directions, on the back of which the disappointed purchaser had scrawled:—"A d——d catchpenny! tried fifty times, but never once could light the candle." My worthy old friend Mr. Gibb, formerly custodiar of the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh, performed his daily exploit of kindling the fire by means of gunpowder, and a cumbrous engine, like a musket lock, black with age; which I doubt not he considered the *ne plus ultra* of artistical refinement in that department: I know he regarded it lovingly, and was very jealous of its being meddled with.

Yes, truly, at this epoch of 1794, in regard to mechanical and physical improvements for our own comfort and well-being, so awfully remote were we from the standard of 1849, that one may naturally feel puzzled by the question: "How could people contrive to live in such times?" In the north of Scotland especially, our notions and fashions were all excessively queer. I can attest this correctly enough, for it is very certain, that the said notions continued with hardly a shade of difference during the next ten or fifteen years. In all our ways, both highways and bye-ways, we were obstinate and eccentric then. As to the former particularly (at least in the county of Kincardine), we had become quite touchy and punctilious.

I have spoken about the warm reception which Mr. Jones would probably have met with in those days, if he had appeared too suddenly with his lucifer-matches. But I am altogether sure, that if Mr. M'Adam could have drawn in his chair and given advice at a Laurencekirk or Stonehaven road-meeting, he would have been opposed and laughed at. His plan of breaking the large pebbles and whin-stones into small morsels, would have been scouted, on account of the time, labour, and expense, and his preference for a winding way through the valleys, instead of toiling right athwart the hill-tops, would have been vilified on account

of the increased distance and the danger of inundations. In short, Mr. M'Adam, to a dead certainty, would have been "pooh-poohed down." In all our ways, we were a very determined and resolute people *then*.

As to fashions, in good truth, we "came out" quite as exemplarily as in physics. It is, by the way, a most complexive word this fashion, and might serve as a text for a bulky volume, but then, as now, it was used principally for fashion in dress and exterior decoration. And there, indeed, we came out respectably and strong. The savages of Timbuctoo and Owyhee could scarcely do better. Our women, indeed, did not stick wooden skewers through their nostrils and ears, nor were they tattooed; but, as equivalent, they wore ear-rings of course; they still carried lofty mysterious edifices, made of horse-hair, on their heads; they still powdered, patched, and painted, and the work of the *friseur* always occupied an hour, and occasionally a much longer time.

As I have already observed in another place, even the literature of the day was in some degree modified by these charming fashions. A three volume novel of the year 1794, might well have been scribbled within a week, for it had come to be an understood convention that each volume of a truly fashionable romance should contain just as

much of printing as might conveniently be perused during one sitting, under the manipulations of a fashionable *friseur!*

It is hardly needful to observe that the style of dress for men was, in those days, quite as ridiculous as for women. The powdered curls were considered indispensable for both. I believe, but am not sure, that his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales had by this time begun setting that fashion with regard to the neckcloth, which afterwards existed for a long series of years. Every respectable dandy (macaroni or buck *alors*), required the shelves of an entire wardrobe for his neckcloths alone. However, the fashion did not arrive at the point of perfection until some years later. With less than three large cravats worn together, the business of the toilette could not be completed; but frequently half-a-dozen were employed, and, for the symmetrical arrangement of so many swathes of muslin, it was but reasonable that much time should be allowed. I have known three hours and more spent in *vain* efforts to adjust properly the outermost wrapper and conclusive tie.

By the bye, if any one wishes to contemplate a macaroni's portrait, exhibiting to the best advantage this elaborate style of costume, he should refer to an engraved likeness, dated, I think, in 1798, of his aforesaid Royal Highness the Prince

of Wales. I have seen only one copy, which hangs in the dining-room *chez* my kind friend Mr. Hamilton, H. B. M. consul at Boulogne-sur-Mer. If another can still be had, it might possibly be obtained through that most industrious and liberal of dealers, Mr. Creed, formerly of Russell Street, Covent Garden, and now of New Oxford Street. It is a charming specimen in its way.

But among wealthy lairds in the north of Scotland, anno 1794, there existed still a minority of the old school, who despised such curious innovations — men who wore square cut, ample coats, with heavy broad lappels, and huge pockets; who adhered to the old-fashioned stock for a cravat, instead of the voluminous folds of India muslin; men who perseveringly sported the periwig and cocked hat; who donned boot hose of Zetland fabric during their equestrian excursions, and sometimes drew them off on their arrival, exhibiting black silks and gold shoe and knee buckles in the drawing-room.

These were in truth a droll fraternity. Such I may call them, for, differing as they did in shades of character, they were on leading points wonderously alike. For example, all, with perhaps one exception in a county, were inordinately hard drinkers, and nearly all, if truth must be told, were crotchetty, narrow-minded, ignorant and

tyrannical. *Soi disant* Whigs might be found among them, but every one turned into a rabid Tory when placed in his own domestic elbow-chair. Yet, in spite of all this, and to neutralize the censure, one cannot help cherishing a certain shade of kindly indulgence, if not of deference for the memory of this old school. With all their failings, not forgetting the obstinacy, ignorance, &c., there were some good qualities blended; and by taking away any part of the *mélange*, you might perhaps have decomposed, if not destroyed, the whole.

For example, it might be argued by hypothesis, that had there been a Father Matthew to make them sober, he would thereby have impaired their spirit of convivial hospitality, though this, it must be owned, is not a necessary *sequitur*. Hospitable in truth they all were, most of them profusely so; and some *very* few were not merely profuse over their cups, but rationally and consistently generous. Brave and hardy too they were, and sincere lovers of their own country, which is always a good and praiseworthy sentiment.

And there was, moreover, a certain method even in their eccentricities, a vein of natural pleasantry, with a mixture of rough worldly wisdom, which it is amusing, if not edifying, to reflect upon. True it is that their jokes and pleasantries,

like those of the good burgesses of Krähwinkle, would not tell with equal force out of their own sphere. A "right merry jest" at Aberdeen would excite but little merriment in St. James's Street. An adventure marvellously droll upon the swarthy moors of the Grampian Hills, might lose its best points if repeated on Hampstead Heath.

And yet, strange to say, one of the most illiterate, *obdurately* illiterate and obtuse, of those old-fashioned grandees, has already had his name in print. He has figured more than once in magazines, and been commemorated by autobiographers! And at the time when Carlton House was in its so-styled glory, the late amiable and facetious Mr. M. Harris was specially invited thither, in order that he might recite to his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, his far-famed anecdotes of the Laird of Balnamoon, pronounced Bonnymune, or rather Bonnymœne. In this gentleman's mode of telling the stories, no doubt there must have been considerable comic force, otherwise a critic so fastidious and acute as his Royal Highness would not have felt interested. But as to the substance of those *historiettes*, independently of the narrator's comic manner, sure enough there was little that merits preservation.

I have, however, been repeatedly desired to resuscitate the laird of Bonnymune, who hap-

pened to be my neighbour in early days; and if I am to attempt this at all, it may as well be done in my first or second chapter as elsewhere. (Indeed, twaddling stories suit best with the epoch of childhood). As already said, the traditionary anecdotes of this worthy are meagre, but the laird himself, contemplated on his own paternal acres, I think did form an object of some interest to those who are fond of observing eccentric characters in odd situations. I have a dim, dreamy apprehension of having once seen the veritable man; but all that remains of him in my mind consists of boot-hose, a coat with great square pockets and flaps, a periwig and cocked hat. His visage, demeanour, and style of conversation, have all faded away. Perhaps I never did meet the man at all, for at the period now referred to, if still alive, he was very old and infirm; but I have had letters in his own hand, bearing date 1790-91. However, I knew his place of residence vastly well.

At a "convenient distance," that is, four or five long miles from the nearest market town, on the border of the Grampians, but on level marshy ground, under the black and bleak hill of Catterthun, stood, and no doubt still stands, his ancestral mansion. Environed and sheltered was it by stunted woods, principally of dark Scotch firs;

and from the character of the scene altogether, it might seem to rash and inexperienced observers a most gloomy abode. It was like the whole world, however, to the laird of Bonnymune. It was his own domain, where he ruled like a petty sovereign, and in comparison with which, the rest of the so-called world afforded but mere subsidiary adjuncts.

Among the old laird's numerous peculiarities was this, that he would not use a carriage, but always travelled on horseback; and it is to be supposed that he never travelled very far, because he had made it a rule absolute that he would not retire to rest at night in any house under the moon except in his own paternal stronghold. His ancestors had all lived contentedly there, and so did he. Strange to say, some of them must have been *literati*, therefore very different from our venerable friend, for in a certain old tower they had preserved a valuable family library, of which more hereafter.

For the vicinity of the market-town, unless it were to gossip, to sell cattle, or to dine with his friend the provost, the laird cared not a rush, for he never lacked provisions. According to ancient usage, his rents from petty tenants were in great part paid in *kain* hens, and he had always poultry enough, including geese, ducks, and turkeys to

supply a garrison. The Grampian hills, swarthy as they looked, afforded herbage for numberless sheep. Beeves, too, and game, partridges, hares, and grouse, he had in abundance. He brewed his own ale, and baked his own bread. His wine-merchant would have honoured his order for twelve pipes as confidingly as for twelve dozens of wine. In Scotch phraseology, he might be called "self-contained," self-subsistent this laird, or in less metaphysical terms, he had all resources and appliances of comfort within his own paternal estate, and thither he allured many friends by dint of hospitality; for in so far as concerns providing and proffering great stores of food and drink, such means of becoming popular and praiseworthy were never wanting at Bonnymune. Arrive there on any day of the year, provided you did not forget the dinner hour—for he would not wait even for an invited guest—you were sure of a hearty welcome and ample cheer.

There was not merely enough, but superabundance. Six or eight *kain* hens in one dish formed a not unusual *entrée;* on gala days these were responded to by six or eight more at the other end of the table. In like manner it might happen that two gigots of mutton or two roast pigs were paraded. But let it not be inferred that there was any deficiency of miscellaneous *entrées* or ele-

gant *hors d'œuvres.* On the contrary, the *cuisine* at Bonnymune was famed for a multiplicity of productions, curious and *recherchés*, particularly ancient Scotch inventions now almost forgotten, though an ingenious attempt to revive them is sometimes made at the anniversary dinners of the Edinburgh Antiquarian Society. It is almost needless to add, that the wines, ale, and whiskey, "the drinks," as dear amiable Mrs. Gamp would have said, "*was* all good;" and I think the old laird of Bonnymune would scarcely have found it in his heart to withhold a welcome even from his inveterate enemy if he had ventured to present himself at dinner-time.

And in the drawing-room, moreover, there were always "nice conversible young leddies," some of whom could perform on the spinet, the celestina, or harpsichord; and there were whist-tables, loo-tables, faro-tables, according to fashion in those most enlightened times. In short, there was to be found at Bonnymune all that can solace and gladden the heart of convivial man. But, as a matter of course, the old laird, like all his fraternity of lairds, loved drinking, hearty, convivial, uproarious drinking, and would have thought it impossible to live without that resource. Moreover, in all scholastic acquirements he was dolefully deficient; wrote (when forced to write) with

much labour and many growls, an awfully cramp and precise hand, very legible, however: detested books, and despised their authors. Lastly, and as aforesaid, he travelled always on horseback, would not go to sleep in any house but his own, and was attended in all his excursions by a confidential servant, whose name, by some singular chance, was not Saunders, but Peter.

On these elementary principles (negations rather) in Bonnymune's character, were founded Mr. Harris's facetious anecdotes, which, I have already said, amount in substance to woefully little; but as I have been particularly requested to repeat them, here they come!

CHAPTER II.

ANECDOTES OF BONNYMUNE. — HE RIDES HOME UPON A FAIL DYKE. — LOSES AND RECOVERS HAT AND WIG IN A MOOR AT MIDNIGHT.—HE TURNS NIGHT INTO DAY.—HIS CRITICISM ON BOOKS IN VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS. — THE PRINCE REGENT'S FAVOURITE STORY. — HOW THE LAIRD AND JOHN THE CARPENTER COUNSELLED TOGETHER. — ANECDOTES OF LORD ARBUTHNOT. — HIS PARSIMONY. — HIS MEMORY DEFENDED. — IMPORTANCE OF HEREDITARY ACRES.—PECULIARITIES OF HIS LORDSHIP'S MENAGE.

THE good old magnifico's taste in drinking became at length obtuse, so that one evening after dinner, at a friend's house, he very willingly drank cherry-bounce, mistaking it for port, and declaring that it was a "pleasant, pure, fruity, and generous wine, and very old in bottle." As a matter of course, when the midnight hour approached, the laird wished to ride home, and the horses were ordered. But Peter had never in his life seen his venerable master "so far gone;" besides, they had a long way to ride, and the night was both dark and gusty.

After some consultation with the kind host and

his family, it was agreed that Bonnymune could not, and must not attempt to ride home. But as any proposition for his going to bed or staying in the house after twelve o'clock would be resisted and resented with obduracy, stratagem was used.

They led him out of doors with a light, which the wind instantly extinguished. Then, in the pitchy darkness, they assisted him to mount, not upon horseback, but upon a *fail* dyke, *Anglicè*, turf-wall, a common kind of fence in the far North. Here Peter had cleverly attached the bridle to the stump of an elder-bush; he put the reins and the whip into his master's hands, and then retired with the words, "Noo, your honour, the road 's straight afore ye!"

Away went the laird, as he supposed, whipping and spurring to his heart's content, till he arrived at the land of dreams and utter oblivion, when wearied of his exertions he tumbled off. Now Peter ventured to advance. "Eh, sirs! Hech me, to think o' the like o' that!" Then, raising his voice, "We 're at hame noo, sir! We 're at hame, I 'm tellin' ye! Your honour's just fa'en off at our ain stable door!"

But stratagem was no longer needed. The laird persisted most comfortably in his profound sleep, and was carried to bed without a murmur. Next morning, however, no sooner did he awake to con-

sciousness, than he vowed vengeance for the trick that had been played on him; declaring, moreover, that had he been allowed his own way, he could have ridden home as well as ever he did in his life. He departed at day-break in huge wrath, and would not by any persuasions be induced to visit at the same house again. It is, I must own, but a meagre story this; nevertheless it was no doubt considered a "right merry jest" in the year 1794, on the Grampian hills, and it always formed one among Mr. Harris's comic recitations.

Now for anecdote number two, the whole merit of which depends on a few words of broad Scotch (a mere *platitude*, by the by), uttered by the faithful Peter. It happened on another occasion, after an equally convivial meeting, the laird had, as usual, been amply supplied with port, claret, and whiskey-punch, but had not exceeded the bounds of discretion. Midnight arrived—the weather was fractious, but not at all formidable; especially as,

> "The mune, I ken her horn,
> Was shining in the lift sae hie."

So the laird, in excellent trim, started on horseback, followed by Peter; and they were bravely trotting homewards; but in crossing a wild desolate moor (there could be none wilder than those near his own mansion), a gust of wind came athwart the road, and carried off the magnifico's periwig and

cocked hat. Again did Peter exclaim: "Eh, sirs! hech me, to think o' the like o' that!" But on this occasion the laird was not at all oblivious; he reined in his pony, and angrily summoned the faithful squire to get him his hat and wig.

The first was secured after a hazardous chase, valiantly performed by Peter on horseback. To discover the second was a work of time, patience, and labour: but at last, during an especially kind glimpse of the moon, it was fished out of a muddy pool. The dignitary essayed to put on his wig, but unluckily it did not fit well; and no wonder.

"Peter, ye unhang'd scoon'rel!" said the laird; "what do you mean? *This* is no' MY wig!"

"In troth, then," responded Peter, "your honour maun just be content; for there 's nae *wile* o' wigs here!"

In plain English, Bonnymune, with all his dignity, could not command a *choice* of wigs on a bleak moor at one o'clock on a winter's morning. And this *naïve* response of Peter was cherished in the North as if it had been a special witticism.

Thus having illustrated, by anecdote, the laird's propensities for conviviality and riding-home at midnight, I shall only repeat one more, which refers to his dislike of books and contempt for their authors. This, I believe, was his majesty King George the Fourth's favourite story, for which

reason I am admonished that it deserves being once more recorded. I say once more, although current and common as it used to be in the far north, I am not aware that it ever appeared in print. As a conscientious chronicler, however, I may observe that the facetious Mr. Harris, in arranging this anecdote, availed himself of one event respecting the family library, which did not take place till the reign of the old laird's next heir and successor; *mais, c'est égal cela.*

Be it declared, then, that once upon a time, a good friend of the old laird's came by chance to dinner—of course was hospitably entertained—and the weather being tremendous, was consequently invited to stay all night. Next morning the storm had increased. This Peter averred when he came to awake his master: "Catterthun had on his nicht-cap; the rain blattered on the windows; the fords were impassable; 't was an awfu' morning for baith man and beast!"

"Harken, Peter, ye villain!" said the laird. "Is Sandie Hunter come doon the stair for his breakfast yet?"

"No, your honour."

"It 's an awfu' mornin', ye say? Then, ye 'll gang direct to the parlour; see that the fire 's blazin', licht the cawnels, set the punch bowl filled wi' plottie on the breakfast table, steek the shutters,

and we 'se try what kind of a nicht it will mak!" (In plainer language, what sort of a night we can make of it).

Now it so happened that this visitor, in comparison with the laird, might be reckoned a *savant*. He was at least an amateur of old books, and he by no means loved inordinate drinking. On his descent into the banquetting room, therefore, he was not a little alarmed and amazed at the effect of the laird's orders, which had been obeyed to the letter. Instead of admiring such proceedings, he would have opened the shutters if he durst. Steadfastly he refused to accept even one glass from the punch-bowl, and restricted himself to tea, with eggs, grouse-pie, mutton-ham, kippered salmon, rolls, bannocks and marmalade.

"Weel, every man to his taste, and do as ye like, Sandie," said the laird; "but I think ye 'll no be for facing the road this day, and ye 'll no venture far at the pootin'!" (*Anglicè*, shooting).

"In troth, no," replied Sandie; "it 's a day for keeping cosie at the ingle-neuk. But if I dared mak sae free, Bonnymune, have ye nae auld buiks aboot the house, that micht help to keep a boddie out o' languor in a weety mornin' like this?"

"Buiks, man?" repeated the laird; "ten cartloads o' them, gin ye like; and what 's mair, ye 're welcome to tak' them hame to your ain house,

if ye think siccan rubbish worth the expense o' cartage!"

As might be supposed, the intelligent visitor felt attracted by this, and desired to examine the neglected repertories, to which the laird assented; and in the course of the morning, Peter was employed to open the window-shutters in the library room of the old tower, now seldom visited. Arrived there, the connoisseur began eagerly to scrutinize the contents of the shelves, Bonnymune all the while peering over his shoulder, and accompanying his proceedings with a continued verbal commentary, which Mr. Harris used to recite as a kind of running bass, or series of contemptuous grunts, varied by Sandie's exclamations of delight or admiration.

"Beautiful Elzevirs!" exclaimed the latter. "And here, on my conscience, editions *in Usum Delphini*, with uncut edges, that look as if they had never been opened!"

"Them's Laytin buiks, I see," interposed the laird. "Heathen trash! Hech, hech! What the callants are garr'd work at in the schule, when they 're done with their arithmetic, just to keep them frae stealing apples, or playing at pitch and toss. Wha the deèvil was ever the better for being able to read Laytin, I wad be glad to ken? Is na' our dominie just the stupidest boddie in a' the

parish?" (A pause, till the *savant* changed his position.)

"And noo, Sandie, ye 're delvin' and houkin' amang that rubbish o' Greek. There 's no muckle there that ye can translate better than me, I 'm thinking. Weel, I never got owre muckle Laytin, and I never could *Greek it* ava, that 's gospel truth; but I ken the buiks, because the vera printed letters is no' readable." (Another pause.)

"Them 's English history buiks," resumed the laird; "ilk ane telling the tale his ain gait and contradictin' his neebor; as if we needed to care what the chaps did and said in days o' lang syne. Will *that* pit siller in our purses, or smeddum into your brains or mine?"

"And noo' ye 're pokin' in a heap o' auld trash, poyems and plays and novels, deevil's buiks, I reckon; contrivances just for diverting idle loons, and helping them to turn young limmers' heads!"

"Bonnymune," said the *connoisseur*, "here 's an auld folio—it 's a play book—that I wad like to borrow for a while, if there 's nae objection?"

"Borrow!" replied the laird; "the chap's doitit, I think. Didna' I tell ye to cart awa' the hale lot o' them! Pit the folio in your saddle-bags, man; mak' a kirk and a mill o't, or licht your pipe with the paper."

Par parenthèse, this despised volume happened

to be the veritable *first* edition of Shakspeare, a rarity now almost unattainable by collectors, at any price; and which afterwards, flanked by the second and third editions, all richly and uniformly bound in Russia leather, was sold to the late Mr. James Roche, of Castle Granagh, for 500*l.* So much for the laird of Bonnymune's worldly prudence in regard to his estimation of old books." *

"Foreign clanjamphry, I see," continued the wise man; "that 's whaur ye 're delvin' the noo. Outlandish mixtry-maxtry, indeed, as if we had na' buiks in plenty o' our ain, without seeking help frae the Pope o' Rome, or the muntibanks in Spain or France."

"Hah!" suddenly screeched the laird, as if stung by a viper, "Sandie, let them buiks alane! I redde ye, let sleepin' dogs lie!. Them 's *law* buiks. D—n them and the writers awthegither! I hae had, and I have it yet, a ganging plea in the Court of Session; five-and-twenty years the villains hae been at it; fifteen hunder pounds sterling wad na' pay their charges, and at this day I 'm no farrer ben than when I set out. D—n

* Respecting the purchase, Mr. Roche acted as agent only. He was a banker, and so good an economist, that I doubt whether he would have parted with 500*l.* to restore William Shakspeare himself to life!

the law buiks, Sandie, and gif I could see them and their authors burning at the stake, wadna' I poke the fire, d'ye think?"

Lastly, and to wind up this long yarn of twaddle, the curious inspector came to a compartment of the library which excited his no little surprise. The books were veritable certainly, but they had an odd appearance, and by no efforts could he extract one volume from its resting-place. Hereupon the magnifico said not one word, but began to chuckle.

"Ye 've said owre muckle about the de'il, I 'm thinking," exclaimed Sandie, "for he 's been amang the buiks here. I never saw the like!"

"Then the de'il was just John, the wricht," (*Anglicè*, carpenter) quoth the laird; "and a clever callant he is. Noo, Sandie man, ye 're a guid bairn, and I 'll tell ye how it happened. The skelves here was auld and worm-eaten, and yae stormy nicht the buiks and skelves thegither fell on the floor wi' a blatter like thunder. Then the greive he wantit the floor for an extraordinar' crap o' blue potatoes, and John cam to mend up the skelves, and like an honest lad *that* he did. But when the job was done, and he tried the buiks, d—n them, they wad na' fit! So he ranged them regular on the floor, measured them with his ruler, and then measured the skelves."

"John and me communed thegither, and I garr'd him tak' the *saw* to the biggest volumes, and he sawed off an inch here and half an inch there, till we made *snod* wark. Then the buiks fitted, and John packit them and drove them in wi' his mell. Ye need na' think to poke there, Sandie; it wad tak' the deil's ain fingers to draw them out again!"

* * * * *

Of Scotch lords and lairds who exhibited considerable eccentricity of character, and who were in full force, and flourished either in 1794 or about that time, I have long ago given some sketches in a series which appeared under the title of "Humours of the North." Of those papers, as written at that period, I could not at this moment recall any portion were it to save my life; the subjects of them, of course, remain to me; but like a hundred far better things—those chapters are lost and forgotten, drifted away on the unceasing stream of periodical literature, whence they could not be fished up again without time, trouble, and expense.

As already observed in regard to the present memoranda, I did not search and grope about for the examples of eccentricity then adduced, nor select them as specially and intrinsically of importance;—on the contrary, they fell in my way unavoidably, as derived either from experience or from

the real history of characters in whose enlightened neighbourhood I had once the honour to live. If their habits and conduct did not reflect much honour on the aristocratic order, it is at least no fault of mine.

Like the old Laird of Bonnymune, distinguished, as we have seen, for having once rode upon a *fail* dyke, and at another time disputed the identity of his own periwig, a certain old Lord Arbuthnot was in those days also reckoned excessively droll, though the phasis of his lordship's pleasantry was altogether different. According to prevalent belief, this nobleman's principal crotchet was parsimony (or penury); yet, in his capacity of miser, he nevertheless helped me, in a rather absurd argumentation, to prove that the Scotch are not avaricious. I contended that his lordship, at all events, ought not to be classed as a miser, but rather as an eccentric humorist, who purposely turned avarice into ridicule whilst he seemed to practise it; and, possibly, the notion was in some respects correct enough. Lord Arbuthnot *caricatured* the part.

His lordship, however, had been bred up and educated in humble sphere; and his habits were formed before he was called on to don the family coronet. Instead of his habits being changed on the acquisition of that new dignity, his character seemed only to become more stubborn and *pro-*

noncé. I presume the family estate was not then entailed, for the new incumbent inherited along with it a great load of debt, accumulated by his predecessors; and with fierce oaths he declared he would liquidate them to the uttermost farthing. Such an undertaking as this, it may be imagined, served him as a very sufficient excuse for a mode of life not otherwise quite consistent with baronial or comitial dignity. Like that of Bonnymune, his lordship's will was law; and, although twice married and twice left a widower, his habits were like those of an old bachelor: and he would not allow any relation to interfere with, or venture near him. Now nothing can be more clear than that in cherishing decision of character and unity of purpose, a share of oddity may well be excused: in truth, it is often inevitable.

In this respect the Lord Arbuthnot of those days (he died before 1794), certainly merited respect instead of ridicule. He persisted, with inflexible resolution, in his purpose aforesaid; and I do not know that the opprobrious term of miser ought ever to have been applied to one who did not aim at hoarding large sums in secret repositories; who neither rack-rented his tenants nor practised usury; but who pinched, pared, and skilfully calculated in order to pay off incumbrances on hereditary acres, and to liquidate

even the personal obligations of his careless predecessors.

An attachment to hereditary acres, and a due recognition of the power thence derivable (with judicious management) to provide against contingencies, and overcome reverses and difficulties—this indeed forms an example worthy of all acceptation and approval. Only conserve the solid acres! Poor and barren as they may appear, retain for the sake of auld lang syne, the old paternal fields. In order to do so, live, if it be necessary, like an anchorite or a poor labourer; and this resolution being formed and adhered to, there remains even for the most embarrassed landowner, a tolerable chance that his worldly fortune will be retrieved.

On the contrary, once entertain a favourite aphorism, often adopted by kind friends on such occasions, "bring your acres to the hammer;" let this be done—and in all probability the *ci-devant* respectable, though embarrassed, proprietor, becomes henceforth like a mere weed driven on the misty waves of chance. He has resigned or lost the resting place that by birthright and the merits of his ancestors was allotted to him, and henceforward it seems almost as if he did not deserve to have any home; if not houseless, he will be homeless! But I am becoming too serious. Lord

Arbuthnot's humour, as I have heard, consisted chiefly in this, that he actually made a parade and boast of his own excessive frugality, therefore might expect to be stared at, and in this way his penurious habits and stratagems might be carried *à l'outrance*. Obliged by his station to retain some household servants, he himself personally was almost independent of their attentions; their appearance was seldom needed, unless when he had visitors, and then, truly, the fare produced, unlike that at Bonnymune, was by no means profuse or sumptuous.

Par parenthèse, I may notice that his lordship's old valet, having much time at his own disposal, was not invariably a model of sobriety, and though never pardoned for infraction of that virtue, was yet never turned out of doors. One afternoon, however, his lordship in great wrath, and with many oaths, declared that such conduct was no longer endurable. "Either you shall quit the house directly, you scoundrel, or *I* must!" (So the viscount wound up his complaint).

"Hech me!" replied Saunders; "and *whaur* dis your lordship think to gang, whaur ye'll be sae weel?" In plainer terms, his lordship might leave the house, but the notion of his own exile therefrom was perfectly inadmissible.

In his ordinary *ménage*, Lord Arbuthnot was,

like Bonnymune, "self-contained," as well as self-willed, but in a very different style. In one mysterious closet, *sanctum* or study, he kept all the means and appliances of his own domestic life. Herein he might seem even to be his own cook and valet. A shrewd man he was, thoroughly versed in what is called "business," and not quite ignorant of books; but as to his fair estate, his broad meadows, heath-clad hills, or cornfields, by all accounts, he never once thought of them but as means of reaping money; he had no eye for the romantic or picturesque. The beauties of the finest landscape, whether in its natural wildness, or adorned by the artistical operations of a Repton, White, Brown, or Marshall, would have been lost on him. He had some taste, however, for Archaiology, or at least for old family archives: and when allusion was made to that edifying event, the "boiling of the sheriff," which took place divers centuries ago, in a royal forest, some ten miles distant from Arbuthnot, his lordship swore with great *gusto*, "By G—, sir, *we* were there!" Indeed, he had at his own command documents commemorating this event, and the names (Arbuthnot included) of those who claimed the king's pardon for the murder.

In the closet or *sanctum* above-mentioned, during his old age, he secluded himself voluntarily,

as a poor man has often done by compulsion in the dreary cell of a prison. In this mysterious apartment he conserved not only his books and papers, but coals, turf, wood, candles, oatmeal, eggs, butter, cheese, and other stores. Hardly any mortal was permitted to enter this private room, and, when entered, it exhibited the most complicated disorder, though it was remarked that if any written document or other article was wanted, his lordship could always discover it at a moment's warning.

If a guest arrived on a winter's day, and complained of cold in the reception-room, where perhaps there was only a smouldering peat in the grate, his lordship would trot back into the closet, and re-appear, carrying a ration of coals on a broken plate. Possibly, he weighed out his own daily portions of food and drink, drove hard bargains with himself, and tried the question on how little he could subsist. This, however improbable, need not be incredible, for, some thirty years later, I knew an instance of a London merchant, a very independent and wealthy man, who scrupulously persisted in the weighing system, screwing himself down at last to a regular expenditure of only one shilling and sevenpence per day, and all for the sake of exhibiting an example of prudence and economy to his two sons, both of whom,

naturally enough, became spendthrifts and devotees to the bottle.

Lord Arbuthnot's decision of character was unalterably marked even in his demeanour and tone of voice. The former was energetic and abrupt; the latter, to say the truth, was habitually the tone of wrath or sarcasm, from which he rarely swerved even in his convivial moments. Perpetually at war with creditors, whose claims he did not pay so fast as they expected; also at war with habits and manners of the times, which he thought finical and extravagant, he yet had his jocose moods, when he could laugh heartily (though sarcastically), and make others laugh. And to his honour be it recorded, that he lived to realize in great measure what he had undertaken, rectifying the blunders of his ancestors, and leaving the family estates in a comparatively manageable and prosperous condition.

When I first heard of this individual (of whom I write from hearsay) he was talked of merely as an oddity. I now feel disposed to regard him with respect, as a memorable and edifying example. If he did not do much good, generally speaking, it was perhaps because he did not live *quite* so long as he intended. Or perhaps he was gifted with extraordinary foresight, and directed his whole attention to the benefit that from his

management and penury would accrue to future generations. For his next and immediate successor, it is true that his lordship could not be expected to entertain much affection or sympathy, for no two characters could be imagined more incongruous than those of the old viscount and his eldest son, the then "Master of Arbuthnot." Of the latter, it is better I should say little, because, to own the truth, I never met with any one who alleged a single trait in his favour. But if his life was not exemplary, neither was it long nor happy. During his minority, deep and constant was the gloom which hung over his abode at Hatton, with its dark fir-woods, so well known to me in after years, when it was deserted and lonely. And yet how comfortable, though always sombre, might this quiet residence have been. With only 200*l.* per annum (more would be superfluous) one might be so well protected there against winter storms, and enjoy in peace the returning glow of spring and summer. But its noble inmates, in 1789 and 1790, I believe, thought and felt very differently.

CHAPTER III.

THE LAIRD OF BRUCKS. — HIS PENCHANT FOR BUILDING. — INGLISMALDIE CASTLE.—THE EARL OF KINTORE.—HIS MODE OF SETTLING ACCOUNTS WITH AN ATTORNEY. — LORD MONBODDO.—HIS PATRIMONIAL RESIDENCE.—AGRICULTURAL ENTHUSIASM.—HIS PHILOSOPHICAL LABOURS AND MANY ECCENTRICITIES.—HIS WORKS UNFAIRLY DEPRECIATED.

I HAVE promised to notice any odd, or otherwise distinguished characters, that come to my remembrance, as belonging to the North of Scotland in those days; and perhaps I ought to allow a few words *en passant* to a certain Laird of Brucks, who was also reckoned a veritable original. Brucks, as far as I know, had never been incommoded with any debts; he had extensive though not fertile lands, and was what the world calls independent; neither was he deficient in such educational acquirements as usually fell to the lot of Scotch lairds during the eighteenth century. But notwithstanding all this, he cherished a very eccentric fancy, namely, that he would lead the life of a common labourer, nay, would labour harder than any of his own paid workmen were willing to do.

In one respect this might no doubt be considered a very exemplary notion. If the now rich proprietor of a great factory or coal mine would go into it for a month or two, and work there like one of his own poor hirelings, without allowing himself one pennyworth more of better food or other comforts than they have, it might perhaps enlighten his mind somewhat, and modify his conclusions respecting the condition of the working classes. However, it may be doubted whether Brucks derived any such enlightenment from his experiments. He was, of course, his own taskmaster; could regulate his own time, feed luxuriously if he pleased, and choose his own kind of work. The sort of labour, which in his wisdom he preferred, was that of building stone dykes, and his leading principle to try how many miles in length of those fences he could swear to having completed with his own hands.

The said stone-dykes were structures of a peculiar and capricious character. They were built either of freestone, with the help of hammer, pick-axe, and wedge, or of unbroken "whinstones," as the case might be; but there existed an indefeasible rule, that the mason must neither use mud nor mortar. How the walls could stand without it was the wonder, but they did stand, with gaps, no doubt, here and there, and were detestable eyesores

to every lover of the picturesque. Of such dykes it is said that Brucks lived to build some scores of miles' length, *manibus propriis*, and when he had fenced all his own fields, he offered a demonstration of his expansive energy and benevolence in behalf of his neighbours.

But in one respect, that of restricting himself to privations and hard-fare, he did by no means conform to the model of his own labourers. Unlike Bonnymune, who always rode, Brucks performed his various journeys, whether long or short, on foot. In this way he not unfrequently crossed the Grampian Hills to visit his friend, the Laird of Morphie, who then resided in a sheltered situation of the Lowlands, on the banks of the beautiful river Northesk. On the day of his arrival, he was contented with any sort of fare, were it but kail-brose and bread and cheese, and the never-failing whiskey-punch; but next morning, the preparation for breakfast made a kind of revolution in the house.

A large salmon, newly caught from the river, a gigot of mutton roasted, were *entrées* not unusual on those occasions. Brucks had been known to devour nearly an entire salmon for breakfast, then attack the gigot, and complacently finish his repast with half a pint of undiluted whiskey, after which he would address his friend in these words: "And

noo, Wullie, man, I think I 'll *sey* the Cairn!" In plain English, *essay* to get across the Grampians, of which the highest that lay in the laird's homeward route was called the Cairn, or "Cairn-a-mount." I believe the distance he had to walk was about thirty miles; a mere trifle for Brucks, who, it is almost needless to add, possessed Herculean strength.

I have said already, that I did not go hunting after such examples of oddity, for if so, it might be alleged with some reason that I made a very stupid choice. They were not selected, but forced on my notice by their proximity. Brucks was an intimate friend of the Laird of Morphie (another original), to part of whose estates my father succeeded by purchase. The noble family of Arbuthnot were our nearest neighbours on one side, and that of the Earl of Kintore, whom I shall now briefly commemorate, on the other.

At this moment, how vividly can I recall his lordship's house in our immediate neighbourhood (where, however, he seldom sojourned), with its extensive copse-woods of wild birch and hazel! This place, I think, was unknown to Sir Walter Scott, but had it been within his range, the castle might have served him for a model better than some which he used in that way. The walls were and no doubt are, ten or twelve feet thick, the

windows, consequently, in deep recesses. It had been of yore surrounded by a deep moat, and had still its remnant of the drawbridge, though this was no longer moveable. I cherished always an affection for this old mansion, because, though inhabited, it was allowed to retain its venerable aspect,* whilst so few baronial castles, large or small, are left in Scotland, which have not either been consigned to ruin, or else repaired in such fashion that their old character is obliterated.

Now, I do heartily rejoice in the notion of a real old fortress remaining in every respect as it was three hundred years ago, only having more convenient furniture, floors well carpeted, instead of being strewn with rushes, and the windows well glazed to keep out the weather. People were very savage and barbarous three hundred years ago, no doubt; and our boasted civilization, if plain truth be told, does by no means exclude savageism (though in a different phasis) at present. But at all events, they understood how to build massive impenetrable walls in those days, and a respectable old mansion had, in its rude way, all necessary precautions for the comfort and convenience of its inmates. Moreover, the builders almost always

* With one sad exception, for I regret to say that the walls of Inglismaldie Castle were "harled"—in English, white-washed.

chose romantic sites for their castles, so that one might infer they were not devoid of a feeling for the picturesque. At Inglismaldie, the principal attraction in that respect consisted in proximity to the river Northesk, and in the wild coppices of oak, birch, and hazel, intersected by numerous lanes and footpaths, winding among the blue heather, where I have wandered many a day.

But to return. My reader will not now be surprised to hear that the aforesaid Earl of Kintore, proprietor of Inglismaldie, was also a veritable original. It might seem, as if through life's voyage, I had been fated to meet only with oddities. The then reigning earl was of too irritable and uncertain a temperament to admit of his mingling much with the so-called world. In early life, he had lived much abroad; he was usually polite and dignified in his manner; rarely visited or received guests, but nevertheless kept up great state and ceremony under his own roof. At intervals (but this did not often occur), his lordship was not quite *maître de soi-même*, and on one of those unfortunate occasions, when there might have been risk in leaving him to his own way, there arrived in travelling equipage from the city of Aberdeen, a stranger of gigantic stature and stern aspect, but modishly attired, who was announced to him as a visitor bearing a grand military title.

The bait took, for the earl received him with calm courtesy, not forgetting, however, to inquire *why* he had been honoured with his visit. But the preconcerted answers being straightforward and satisfactory, he forgot his previous causes of exasperation in the attentions and hospitality due to his distinguished guest, who *en suite* accepted an invitation to stay all night, and so was regularly installed. After a day or two, however, the earl's usual faculties returned, and one morning, after a pause in the conversation, he fixed on his visitor a steady and discriminating gaze. It was a calm look, indicative of a firm conclusion at which his lordship had arrived in his own mind, and which he did not hesitate to express, though this expression, it is true, was more frank than courteous.

"You may be a brigadier general, sir,—I shall not deny that—but" (interweaving a formidable oath) "you smell damnably of the halbert!"

(Parenthetically, I may remind the reader that profane swearing was customary and habitual; it had become an integral part of conversation in those days, in the palace no less than in the pot-house). With these decisive words the spell was broken, the *soi-disant* general's authority expired; but it was no longer needed, for his lordship had become himself again, probably comprehending and

forgiving the *ruse* which had been played off against him, or rather in his own behalf.

I have introduced the foregoing *platitude* for no other reason than because it serves as an introduction to an anecdote reckoned vastly droll in 1794, and which I have noticed already in my "Humours of the North." It can easily be imagined that with such a man as the old Earl of Kintore, to be on intimate terms was not always safe and convenient. The "black dog" might enter on the scene uncalled for, and his lordship's humour chop round in a manner the most unexpected. To do him justice, however, Lord Kintore seldom took a dislike to any one without some good comprehensible reasons. Like Bonnymune, he entertained a hatred of lawyers and law-suits; above all, he mortally detested attorneys, who, in Scotland, are called "writers" (pronounced in the North "vreters.")

Among these last, was a certain practitioner, whose name I have always heard, was Lowe, against whom his lordship cherished a special antipathy. I shall permit the name to remain, as it is not uncommon, though with some reluctance, lest I should be suspected of detracting from the well-merited reputation of the late John Lowe, Esq., a vastly benevolent and respectable "writer" at Stonehaven.

By some chance it happened that to the earl's knowledge came one of those favourite professional tricks in which the aforesaid Mr. Lowe (not John the benevolent) delighted to indulge. The "vreter" had got into his clutches as debtor a certain petty farmer, father of a poor family on one of his lordship's estates, and this man came humbly and implored the earl for advice and protection. Now, on such occasions, Lord Kintore usually felt slow to interfere. In his own words, he "did not like puzzling his brains with other people's affairs, which might or might not be as they represented." But, on this occasion, a thought struck him.

It was clearly enough ascertained that the "writer's" conduct had been very grasping and usurious, also very harsh and obdurate; farther, that he had seized all which the poor farmer possessed, and a sale thereof by auction would take place within other two days. Forthwith his lordship prepared a missive for the attorney, written *more suo*, in a cramped hand, legible as print, on a very small allowance of paper, but handsomely sealed with coat-of-arms and coronet. "Lord Kintore presents his compliments, and will be glad to hear by return of the bearer, whether Mr. Lowe can make it convenient to call at Keith Hall this evening on professional business. Mr. Lowe

is requested to bring with him the papers and documents (if any) in the affair of Saunders Johnston."

On perusing these lines, the attorney was not without some shade of apprehension. It was clear, however, that he must obey the summons, and he endeavoured to persuade himself, from the courtesy and precision of the earl's note, that no violent out-break need be anticipated. However, he took a clerk along with him.

The earl received them with a tranquil amenity which might have neutralised all suspicions; only, in a decisive tone of voice, he intimated that the clerk's attendance was unnecessary. Mr. Lowe pleaded that "sometimes his hand was inclined to be a wee shaky after a lang ride, and if his Lordship would excuse—." His lordship's eye kindled, however, and he ordered the man down stairs. Then, with the precise calmness of a thoroughbred *homme d'affaires*, he examined into the ground of Mr. Lowe's power over the unfortunate farmer, disputing and reducing several items, which the attorney vainly strove to defend. At last a balance was agreed upon, and a receipt in full of all demands prepared and signed; this his lordship carefully locked into his *secretaire*, then paid the amount in gold and silver.

"You would like something to drink, perhaps,"

said the earl, who could not forget the national rules of hospitality.

"Aweel, my lord, I wadna' be the waur o' a wee drap dram, afore I tak' the road."

His lordship placed bottle and glass upon the table, but, having done this, he deliberately locked the room door, and put the key into his pocket. Mr. Lowe began to tremble.

"You admit that everything in this affair of Saunders Johnston is settled to your satisfaction, Mr. Lowe?" inquired his lordship.

"Everything, surely," replied the attorney; "I humbly thank your lordship, and am glad that Saunders, honest man, is sae weel out o' his troubles."

"Now, harkee, Mr. Lowe," resumed the earl, "it so happens that in regard to this matter of Johnston, I am not yet so entirely satisfied as you seem to be. You see those two candles on the table?"

Mr. Lowe admitted that he saw them.

"Then by G— you shall eat them! D'ye hear? You shall eat those candles, sir, otherwise you never quit this room a living man."

"Eat the cawnels, my lord?" faltered the attorney. "Surely, my lord, that's a joke!"

"Oh, 'tis a joke, is it?" said Lord Kintore, turning again to the *escritoire*, whence he produced

a brace of small pistols. One of these he put into his side-pocket, the other he held in his hands, scientifically drawing his thumb-nail along the edge of the flint, and opening the pan to see that the priming was in order.

"You shall eat that pair of candles, sir," reiterated his lordship—"eat them by G—, or you never quit this room alive!"

If Mr. Lowe, instead of trembling like an aspen leaf, had been the bravest man that ever breathed, it might have been in vain under the circumstances to contradict Lord Kintore, who it was well known, if once thoroughly exasperated, would set all ordinary considerations of prudence or *morale* utterly at defiance. As a matter of necessity, then, the attorney did eat the candles, obtaining, however, by abject entreaties, the special grace that he might use his own penknife for cutting the wicks into shreds.

"Now, sir," said Lord Kintore, whose wrath seemed to grow instead of being appeased, you will remember me next time if you should ever get another poor devil like Saunders Johnston into your clutches. And for the present, you have great reason to be thankful that you are treated so mildly. I ought at least to have cut your ears off, you hypocritical, sordid, lying, sharking, scoundrel!"

Such unceremonious treatment, as applicable to attorneys or sheriffs' officers, I believe used to be common enough in Ireland, but in the north of Scotland, his lordship's conduct on this occasion might have been considered *un peu trop fort.* It was not so, however,—every one laughed heartily, and applauded his treatment of the merciless "writer."

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My reader, perhaps, thinks as I do, that I have said already more than enough about country neighbours fifty years ago. But were I to follow out some suggestions received since commencing these memoirs, I should proceed on the same tack for several chapters.

The lords and lairds, respecting whom I have already twaddled, were no doubt of great importance in their own era, and in their own sphere, otherwise they might rest in deserved obscurity. At this time, however, we had at a few miles' distance a country neighbour of very different *calibre,* whose name is still widely known, and who therefore merits more serious notice, I mean Lord Monboddo; but he had arrived at the period of extreme old age before I could individually even wonder at him, and he died in 1799, aged 85.

Another gloomy and very old house at the foot of the Grampians, in that respect not unlike Bon-

nymune, was the patrimonial residence of this distinguished judge. Yet I ought not to have called it gloomy, for at all events, the site commanded an extensive prospect over the beautiful lowlands. Monboddo was but a small estate, not more, I fancy, than about twelve hundred acres, where his lordship carried on his farming speculations on a moderate scale, but with intense interest. On his return hither from professional avocations, he might say with Cicero: "Venio nunc ad voluptates agricolarum, *quibus ego incredibiliter dilector.*" Accordingly he manifested his delight even in externals, for he immediately laid aside his official raiment of black, and donned the ordinary dress of a working farmer, with a blue bonnet, such as was then worn by every peasant. Among "right merry," but now rather insipid jokes respecting him, it was recorded that once upon a time when he arrived late, after the long weary session of the Edinburgh courts (which at that era was protracted nearly till September) he instantly demanded a candle and lantern, wherewith he marched out into the fields, incontrollably impatient to ascertain the size of his turnips.

Notwithstanding his extraordinary talents and acquirements, this distinguished judge, having fallen on "evil times," could scarcely comfort himself, as an author, with having found the "fit

audience though few." His ponderous quartos were not read nor understood in his life-time, but they were perseveringly ridiculed, and have now fallen into almost utter oblivion. In truth, Monboddo's merits were not easily comprehensible; few readers, if any, were disposed to travel with him in the maze of his metaphysical researches; but *per contra*, his eccentricities were obvious and intelligible to the meanest capacity; and so the world of Edinburgh, and of the far north, conveniently and pleasantly fixed their attention on these only.

As a metaphysician and hard student his lordship was somehow not acceptable in our enlightened society; we could not amalgamate or "cotton" well together. Indeed, he himself says of his principal work in three quartos, that if he wished to offer it for sale, no publisher in Britain would give even one shilling for the copyright! But as an eccentric humorist, and being thereby the "cause of wit in others," he was acceptable *par tout*, so that by degrees Monboddo, the philosopher, was forgotten and superseded: we had in his place only Monboddo who danced on the house-top on December mornings; who dared to avow his belief in krakens, mermaids, and aerolites; who insisted that the "ancients were better than we," and yet insisted no less that "our original

ancestors were ourang-outangs," an assertion, by the by, which will not easily be discovered in any of his multifarious writings. It was, I suppose, one of those ingenious interpolations in which *ultra*-facetious critics are apt to indulge, in like manner as we have imputed idealism to Berkeley, who was a sturdy realist; and mysticism to Kant, who never ventured on a proposition which he could not demonstrate.

If any critic now-a-days should contend for the merits of Monboddo's metaphysics, and wish to revive him as a model, the said critic might very properly be looked upon as a candidate for a situation in Bedlam. But in justice to my venerable neighbour's memory, I must observe that no reader who has become really intelligent in metaphysics as a science will despise Monboddo's labours. He himself could not separate the grain from the chaff and stubble, or, in better words, could not turn it to account when he found it. But that valuable grains were discovered by him is very sure, for the notions of early metaphysical writers, whose works he so indefatigably studied, are not contemptible nor useless, though his lordship wildly maintained that they had arrived at the *ne plus ultra* of wisdom.

If truth be told, metaphysics, as a science, was among us in a state nearly as hopeless under the

management of other authors, as under that of Monboddo; but, excepting the "wicked" Hume, they were all content and careful to "dwell in decencies," so that the reader, if not greatly edified or thoroughly convinced, was neither shocked nor alarmed by their productions, nor could he find therein any plausible pretext for sarcastic mirth. On the contrary, Monboddo, by his useless fancies and rash conclusions, did most obdurately provoke and challenge ridicule. And there was not the remotest hope of his ever mending in this respect, because in all his crotchets he was most fervently and immutably sincere.

Selon lui, the ancient Greeks were unquestionably men of mettle; the Romans, too, had some pretensions, but since their times, mankind had gradually and pitifully degenerated; and why? If he had not been ready with a hundred other arguments, one would have sufficed for Monboddo; namely, that luxurious indulgences of every kind were enervating, vicious, poisonous; he held even modern comfort in abomination! "Mens sana in corpore sano" was his favourite aphorism, and as comfort and luxury had gradually gained ground, and thereby bodily strength been impaired, intellectual vigour, as a matter of course, had declined also. On these points, by his own daily practice, he proved the sincerity of his faith, setting all popular

doctrines about comfort at defiance. Resolute was he on the duties of early rising, and of "case-hardening" in all its varieties. *On dit*, that at day-break, he would start out of bed; if during snow and frost, so much the better; then, denuded of all raiment, walk or dance for an hour on the leads at the house-top, and this he called his air-bath. I rather doubt the accuracy of the statement, however; but he certainly did not omit the cold plunge-bath in the severest weather, a practice which at present would seem nothing extraordinary; but it was thought very eccentric *then*.

His contempt for being "dragged along at a horse's tail instead of mounting on his back," is well known. Almost every year he visited London, performing, of course, the whole journey on horseback, and in one of these excursions was accompanied by his youngest daughter, then remarkable for her beauty, who durst not shrink from the fatigue, though she suffered by it. On that occasion occurred another right merry, but now insipid joke, namely, King George the Third, at his levee, happening to inquire of his lordship and of a military man, successively, how they had come to town, found reason to remark upon the answers: "Very odd, very odd! my judges gallop to town on horseback, and my cavalry officers travel snugly in the mail-coach!"

Probably the happiest portion of Monboddo's life was that when he could appear daily in peasant's costume, with blue bonnet on his head, in the character, as he said, of plain Farmer Burnett, setting an example to all his neighbours of activity, industry, cheerfulness, and hard-living, in a sense the most opposite possible to that in which the phrase was used by convivial *bon-vivants* of the period. His lordship was convivial and hospitable too, but abhorred and despised intemperate indulgence. According to Roman fashion, his favourite time for receiving his friends was at supper; that is to say, at nine o'clock in the evening, and then, though not addicted to the pleasures of the table, he would have hot viands and choice wines. He kept up always great dignity of speech and demeanour, affecting the *os rotundum* of Demosthenes, and endeavoured to raise the character of the Bench, which the broad Scotch and coarse buffoonery of Braxfield, and some other lords, degraded. I have to regret that my reminiscences of Monboddo are so meagre, and have often wondered that no one among his successors has ever thought of publishing an authentic memoir of this eccentric enthusiast, with a review of his whimsical speculations.

CHAPTER IV.

LORD GARDENSTONE.—HIS PECULIAR VIEWS AS A LANDOWNER —HIS TRAVELS ON THE CONTINENT.—HUMOURS OF LAURENCE-KIRK. — MUSEUM AND LIBRARY THERE. — GALLERY OF PORTRAITS.—GEORGE STIVEN.—A VERITABLE GENIUS.

In the same neighbourhood, about the same epoch, flourished another judge, who also aimed at keeping up immense dignity, and who, if not so profoundly learned as Monboddo, was, after his own fashion, equally original. This was Francis Garden, Lord Gardenstone.

I think this lord's prevailing crotchet hinged on the manner in which he managed his estate and tenantry. His purposes were doubtless vastly good and laudable, but he did not carry them out in a very liberal or sagacious way. His lordship happened to possess a long straggling village, consisting principally of poor cottages or hovels, built of turf and mud. Like Krähwinkel, it had only one street, which also formed part of the high road from Edinburgh to Aberdeen. The village was (and, of course, is) fully a mile long, and notwith-

standing its poor accommodations, contained a great diversity of characters. In all ages, the so-called lower orders, like the higher, have had their eccentric originals, and in this respect the humble village of Laurencekirk was eminently well provided.

As proprietor of this place, and of considerable adjoining estates, did Lord Gardenstone conceive the notion of enacting at once the parts of a Solon and a *petit souverain*. In this latter capacity (and I ought scarcely to have admitted the word petty), I feel persuaded that his lordship, at Laurencekirk, did regard himself as, in consequential dignity, at least a match for his renowned contemporary, Frederic the Great, at Potsdam. I do not, in the least, remember what Lord Gardenstone's notions as to forms of government were, nor, consequently, whether his plan or ideal for that of Laurencekirk might not originally have been republican rather than monarchical. But I feel quite sure that in all practical details, like Bonnymune and Lord Arbuthnot, he leaned to the monarchical and despotic system.

His lordship's crotchets, like those of Monboddo, deserve a more accurate notice than I am able to give; for as a landowner he started notions which at that time were quite novel and original. "I could not," says he, "carry my land to the gates

of a flourishing town, but I could erect and establish a thriving town in the heart of my land!" In furtherance of this plan, he actually advertised for settlers; the would-be sovereign canvassed for subjects, premising that they must conform to laws entirely of his own contrivance; and in which, however generous by nature, he by no means lost sight of his own interests. The settlers, I think, had at first to pay only ten shillings annually per acre (of waste ground which before did not yield one penny); but this rent, according to stipulation, must gradually rise to twenty shillings; and not only were they tempted by the low rent, but besides, they were to be benefited by his lordship's advice: in other words, by an especial code of laws for their guidance, which he printed and disseminated, under the cautious title of "An Address to the Inhabitants of Laurencekirk." Now the low rent was undeniable, and the advice of a very wise and great man was in itself alone of great worth; but there were some awkward conditions: for example, every settler must build his own dwelling at his own cost. His lordship would grant certain portions of ground on lease, on moderate terms, and he would give advice (orally or printed) for nothing; but he would not advance one penny in *argent comptant*, to erect a domicile, or for any other purpose. Hence the style of architecture, the

ground plans and elevations at Lawrencekirk, were extremely queer. Every settler framed his cabin of turf and heather as he best could; though some few speculators did venture on stone and lime. The dwelling-houses were seldom joined one to another, but straggled about hither and thither, as if a giant or genius had shaken them at haphazard out of a sack.

These original fancies constituted Lord Gardenstone's grand hobby-horse, to which all other views were subservient. "In some measure," said he, "I have tried a variety of the pleasures which mankind pursue, but never relished any so much as that arising from the progress of my village." And in another place he says, "I heartily wish all our men of family and fortune had the good sense and taste to pursue such objects in place of riot, gambling, races, and great part of their politics."

Truly his pursuits were both harmless and praiseworthy, though, from their manner, almost as ridiculous as the wildest vagaries of Monboddo; yet I rather think Gardenstone was looked upon as a shrewd sagacious man, who, at all events, thoroughly understood what is called "the main chance." In his declining years, when his health became somewhat impaired, he appeared as an author by giving to the world two volumes, enti-

tled, "Travelling Memoranda," bearing for motto on the title-page,—

> "Crowns in my purse I have, and goods at home,
> And so am come abroad to see the world."

It would be charitable, or perhaps it is only just to suppose that the author intended nothing better in these memoranda than mere twaddle, for anything less edifying or amusing than his *itinéraire* can hardly be imagined. He went to "see the world," this learned judge, but the harvest of his observation was indeed woefully meagre. He seems to have beheld little else than the reflection of his own unalterable dignity, and the gradual diminution of the siller crowns in his own purse, for many pages of his book are occupied exclusively with accurate copies of postmasters' and wine-merchants' bills. "Chablis," he observes, "suited him tolerably well for small-beer during dinner;" but by proper management, he did not fail to obtain the more generous and reanimating wines of Burgundy, Hermitage, Côte-roti, and Châteauneuf, of which the moderate prices are faithfully communicated, in order that the reader, when he went abroad, might do the like and avoid being cheated. If Lord Garden-stone had written an autobiography, would not his thoughts probably have run into similar channels? Should we not have been initiated into the

deep mysteries of profit and loss on the various items of farming and housekeeping? But this he did not try, and his printed works, which fall within small compass, are, like those of his neighbour Monboddo, utterly forgotten now.

Divers pages might be filled with a record of my Lord Gardenstone's strange doings at Laurencekirk. That some good resulted therefrom is true enough. It would have been marvellous had he failed entirely; but his *modus operandi* and scale of expenditure were so cautiously restricted, that no wonder if the Solon occasionally incurred ridicule. Numberless methods were tried to improve the place after his own queer fashion, excluding of course what would have been too costly. At the northern extremity of the village he did indeed venture to build an inn, whereat he himself occasionally sojourned; and to this inn, he added that most unusual appendage at such places, a library and museum for the instruction and entertainment of travellers.

There were stuffed birds and beasts in glass cases, and geological specimens in drawers, and books which probably were a selection of supernumeraries from the wise man's private stores at Edinburgh. Moreover, on one of the deal tables, liberally covered with the coarsest green baize, lay a folio album, a corpulent tome of blank

paper, inviting autographs and literary contributions from intelligent wayfarers. In all probability, his lordship, like a good simple soul, had been willing to think better of our then existing world than it deserved. At all events, it is clear that if he expected the album would receive compliments or eulogy applicable to himself, or that visitors would leave evidence there of their wit or learning, he met only with utter disappointment.

My lord certainly peeped into the album at times. He could forgive, though he regretted the stupid, illiterate, and unmannerly scrawls that figured there; but he could by no means either forget or forgive *one* astounding witticism which here follows, and which happened to be written in a clear, firm, and literary-looking hand.

"From small beginnings Rome of old
Became a great and populous city;
Yet was first peopled, we are told,
By outcasts, beggars, and banditti.
Quoth Thomas, then the time may come,
When Laurencekirk shall equal Rome."

These exquisite lines did really sting and nettle his lordship. He cared not for the coarse and bungling attacks of the vulgar, but could by no means tolerate a joke against his village from the pen of one who could either rhyme or reason. He forthwith sent for his prime minister, Mr. Beattie, another dignitary in his own way, but

accordiug to *on dit*, a dawdling, narrow-minded, formal "boddie," always in a bustle and in troubles about nothing, to whom my lord was a kind of "Magnus Apollo;" and betwixt them it was agreed that the album should be locked up in its drawer and seen no more.

In his regal and philosophic capacity, he tried various expedients for augmenting his own influence, and enlightening the minds of his subjects. As lawgiver, for example, he printed and distributed a pamphlet, to which I have already alluded, an address to the inhabitants of the village, favouring them with his notions *how* they should live, and what it was they ought to do, in order, I suppose, to gain *his* approbation, for otherwise I cannot recollect hearing of any principles on which his advice hinged. It would be desirable and amusing to find one of these legislative pamphlets now. I feel sure that good, or at all events, diverting points would be discoverable in it. A relation of mine, long since deceased, had once a copy, which he lost, and he told me the most valuable aphorisms, according to his remembrance, were to rise *before* day-break, and to be very particular in providing for every pecuniary engagement even *before* it fell due! Truly there was nothing extremely novel or *recherché* in these. Any old Israelite from White-

chapel or Houndsditch might lecture in this way as well as the most learned judge in the land.

Among the various experiments tried by his lordship, I know of none more amusing than that of having his own (*quasi* royal) picture gallery, comprising portraits of his most distinguished subjects, office-bearers, and friends at the village. A queer assemblage these assuredly were, and a droll artist was he who took the likenesses! If I remember right, this royal gallery was a piece of contract work by a poor foreigner, who achieved his task in coloured crayons, a woeful expedient for portrait painting! Ordinary productions of this class fifty years ago, were hideous failures; those by superior artists were finical and affected, and guard them as you would by every trick of the glazier's art, the colours in both instances were sure to fade. Consequently, after some fifteen or twenty years such portraits became frightful. After fifty years, they sometimes are worse than obliterated; the mouldering remains of the departed taken from their graves could not be more unlike to living beings, than these ghastly shadows are to good pictures.

In this charming style, however, did Lord Gardenstone "cause take" the likenesses of his leading townsmen and tenants; and they completely covered the walls of the grand banqueting

hall, otherwise best parlour of his inn (or palace) at Laurencekirk. Once more I repeat it, they were a droll assemblage, not merely as to physiognomies and features, but on account of originality in their various histories and characters. Among all his vassals, however, the most remarkable, in my estimation, was George Stiven, original projector and artisan of that wonderful production the Laurencekirk snuff-box.

In sober earnest, he was a genius this man, very much resembling in his habits and disposition the character which Hoffman has ascribed to René Cardillac. If Cardillac was the greatest jeweller, George Stiven was, in his own conceit, the greatest snuff-box maker in the universe. Or, I should say that he was alone in this department; "none but himself could be his parallel." Other artists might, indeed, make boxes, but the Laurencekirk *tabatière* was an invention *sui generis*, and utterly apart from all others. Conscious of his own superiority and supremacy, Stiven insisted on having his own way. Like Cardillac, he would thankfully and eagerly accept any number of orders, but the finishing of every particular box was usually a work of three months at least, and no complaints or expostulations would induce him to get into a hurry, or to deliver up any one of the prescious gems of art, till his own good time.

I remember well the long, sharp, meagre visage of this man, placid yet care-worn, as if from over-application, indicating great decision of character. He wore, invariably, spectacles on his hooked nose, and a red woollen night-cap on his head. Stiven might in those days have obtained almost any price that he chose to demand, but to part with his own work when done, or to persuade himself that the said work was entirely and sufficiently perfectionated, seemed to cost him a fearful struggle. It was clear that he cherished a respect for the productions of his own insulated genius. He set a *pretium affectionis* on every box. If he could have lived without money, he would have preferred to keep them all as trophies; only he did not imitate "good Master René" in assassination to get them back again.

It is probable my readers may think that I have trifled and twaddled overmuch in this and the preceding chapters. But be it remembered I have hitherto been writing about an epoch when I was not more than five years of age. It is not much to be wondered at or quarreled with if my recollections of that period should be somewhat childish, or if the portraits I have drawn, like those in Lord Gardenstone's collection, should be rather blurred and sketchy. His gallery was in but poor condition when I saw it last in the year 1813.

CHAPTER V.

THE LAIRD OF SKENE. — HIS AMIABLE CHARACTER. — HIS FAVOURITE DOGS.—LORD PANMURE PROPOSES TOSSING THEM IN A BLANKET.—THE LAIRD DEFENDS THEM WITH A BLUNDERBUSS. — LORD PANMURE'S CHARACTER IN EARLY LIFE.—TENETS AND MORALS OF NORTHERN WHIGS.—HIS LORDSHIP'S VAGARIES. — HIS ACUTE SENSE OF THE RIDICULOUS. — HE INVITES FATHER PEPPER TO BREAKFAST. — THEREAFTER DRIVES HOME THE BODY OF HIS FRIEND DUNTRUNE IN A HEARSE.

But I cannot rashly break the train of associations! Among the worthies of the north at this early period, must not be overlooked George Skene, of Skene, another original, but most estimable man, who repeatedly represented his county (of Aberdeen) in parliament. He lived to a good old age, and the last time I saw him was in 1812, at my house in Northumberland-street, Edinburgh. It may be thought that I ought in the first place to have tried to resuscitate his predecessor, the old Laird of Skene, a boon companion of Bonnymune; but I waive that task, the said old laird having only been remarkable for such amiable

qualities as I have already had occasion to dwell upon sufficiently in other instances.

Lavater, in his excellent aphorisms, tells us that "the man who has no enemies must on that very account be himself good for nothing." There is much force of sarcastic truth in the remark, though it is not quite syllogistic; but the late George Skene probably formed an exception, for I cannot remember that any voice was ever raised against him. His own amenity of temper seemed unconquerable, and his simplicity of manners would have been even ludicrous, had it not been well known how much of sterling good sense lay at the foundation of his character.

Observe the Laird of Skene either in private society or at public meetings, which in those days were often tumultuary and confused, and he never by any chance looked as if a vestige of care or anxiety could enter his mind! His manner was tranquil and unaffected like that of childhood. The grand secret of this was not so much his perfect frankness and integrity as the utter absence of all vanity and ambitious pretension. It is true, he had a slight impediment in his speech, which would have rendered any attempt at commanding, or if the word be allowable, *coercive* eloquence out of the question. He trusted merely to what sound common sense, invincible good humour, and

a keen perception of the ridiculous would enable him to do in carrying public questions, and it was marvellous how Skene by a few words, seemingly uttered more in jest than earnest, could neutralise all the effect which a burly pompous orator with Stentorian voice had just before produced against him.

That where the *plupart* of society had for ages been very savage (degenerating in intellect, as Monboddo argued), matters might from age to age have grown worse, till people became savage altogether, was, I think, not at all an impossible *sequitur*. If the Laird of Skene had his faults and failings in such times, and in such society, it was little to be wondered at; the marvel rather was, how he came by any good qualities!

This laird happened to be a determined old bachelor, and having no relations to reside with him, could conduct his *ménage* after his own fancy. Among his leading peculiarities was that of having a whole kennel of little dogs, principally of the "muff," or Highland terrier breed, constantly about him. The attachment and intelligence of these creatures were most exemplary. They were the laird's inseparable companions, not only sharing his meals and walks, but also his bed, which was large and lofty, and into which all the pack could follow him one after another by a step ladder.

Skene was a thin, diminutive, and sharp-featured man, but wiry and muscular; extremely vivacious; able to bear, if need had been, great hardships; and I believe no being ever existed to whose nature the weakness of timidity or irresolution was more completely alien.

But returning to his faithful companions, the dogs; they could not, it is true, travel about with him, nor appear in the House of Commons. However, he never did travel, and rarely went to a friend's house to dine without *one* favourite at all events, and unluckily for the delicate feelings of his neighbours, he sometimes preferred a sickly favourite, who, forsooth, had "asked to be taken out," as needing change of air and amusement. To say that the Laird of Skene was himself hospitable is surely superfluous; and that being hospitable, he was often necessitated to receive convivial guests, who would neither retire to rest at night, nor "go home till morning" (if then), is another conclusion which might be arrived at without any hints of mine.

He had estates in two counties, and resided at each alternately. When at Carrestone, in Forfarshire, one of his most frequent visitors was the then far-famed Mr. Maule, now Lord Panmure, who sometimes brought with him a clique of the wildest companions he could collect; *tant mieux* for

the laird, who, notwithstanding considerable disparity of years, had quite as keen a sense of the ridiculous as his wild young guest. A bachelor's *cuisine*, wholesome though homely, a larder well stocked, when the season admitted, with red deer and all sorts of game, cellars with stores never failing of sound old wine, and the heartiest welcome, were always to be found either at Skene or Carrestone. But towards midnight, if mulled wine, punch, broiled bones, and other devils were introduced, the mirth and fun grew sometimes over fast and over furious. On one of those occasions, the laird's amenity of temper was sorely tried, and nearly upset.

After having sung all possible songs, reiterated the view-hollah in grand chorus, broken several chairs and the poker in exhibiting feats of strength, and so forth, Mr. Maule and his comrades one night proposed, as a last resource, to toss the little dogs in a blanket. Now after a certain number of bottles, the laird, though he perfectly retained his other faculties, could by no means articulate! It was therefore impossible for him to remonstrate orally against this *mauvaise plaisanterie*. But when a large blanket was actually obtained, and he saw that an insult so gross was about to be inflicted on his favourites, the laird, far advanced as he was in his cups, would not endure it. He left the room

so adroitly that they did not perceive his absence, and before they could miss him, returned, carrying an enormous blunderbuss, which he had loaded with a preposterous charge of powder and wadding.

I think I can yet see vividly the quaint expression of my good old friend's sharp features, as he shouldered and fired it over their heads. The concussion was awful; so great, that a valuable old mirror cracked under it. The laird himself was upset by the recoil; the candles were extinguished, and the room of course filled with smoke. One old gentleman, a well-known member of the legal profession, named Lednathie, who by some chance had been inveigled into that night's revel, was excessively frightened, and begged to be allowed to go to bed, declaring that "the smell o' pouther made him sick." Lord Panmure, on the contrary, was in such ecstacies of admiration at the *ruse* of his friend Skene, so delighted with the explosion, the consternation, the confusion and crashing of glass, that his attention was completely turned from the poor dogs; and henceforth they were upon all similar occasions left unmolested.

Since commencing these "Random Records," George Skene, M. P., is the first among my personal acquaintances of whom I have spoken, and I feel unwilling to part from him, for he was a

steadfast, unaffected, and kind friend. How different, too, from such worthies as his immediate predecessor, the old laird, or his neighbour, the Laird of Bonnymune, who were good for nothing but to quaff "potations pottle deep," to talk nonsense, or excite derision by riding to the realms of Morpheus upon a *fail* dyke! Among sober and discreet friends, when such were to be found, the Laird of Skene could live soberly and discreetly as they. Besides, though self-educated, he was a man of good information; had read more than most country squires, and enjoyed what he read. In his ordinary quiet life, he used much exercise, wandering about in his extensive woods, in winter time pruning his trees, then returning home to very moderate fare, with at most one bottle of wine, or one jug of Glenlivat punch, and the society of his books and dogs. To their company was frequently added that of Signor Stabilini, the musical composer, nearly the best violin player I have ever known. Skene was intensely fond of music, and understood it scientifically, and yet, strange to say, did not himself play upon any instrument except the bag-pipes, and that in a style which always made Stabilini stop his ears and run out of the room.

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Finding myself thus among the old worthies of

the North, I know not well how to get out of the circle, and having named Lord Panmure, then on account of his rank, wealth, and popular manners, *facile princeps*, and now among the very few survivors, I must devote a few pages to him also, though a volume would be more suitable.

The second son of an old noble family, whilst his brother, the earl, had but moderate fortune, and his younger brothers were in the army, he, at the age of twenty-one, stepped into the free possession of large baronial estates, nearly the richest, most varied and extensive that I can remember in the north of Scotland. In the management of these, I believe, Lord Panmure has, from youth to age, inflexibly cherished the rule, that he would not permit even the remotest approach to a rack-rent. Even without rack-renting, and according to the ordinary system of management, his property might well have yielded nearly double that income which his lordship has at any time drawn; but in every lease he seemed to consider the tenant's interest and well-being more carefully than his own.

I have said that Scotch lairds, in 1794, were a fraternity; that though they might differ and quarrel one with another, yet on most points they were all much alike. But Mr. Maule formed a decided exception, and was among them *sui generis*. Entitled, by inheritance, to claim the dormant

peerage of his ancestor, Lord Panmure, he had but recently come into possession of his large estates, and was a young man of the modern world, rather of the Prince of Wales and Royal Duke stamp, than that of the old (or young) Scottish lairds, who, I fancy, were objects oftentimes of his ridicule and sarcasm.

His ample fortune, his profuse hospitality, his capacity beyond others to endure convivial excesses with impunity, above all, his joyous, cordial, affable manners, which diffused cheerfulness wherever he went—these were points on which he stood elevated and alone, without rival or competitor, in those northern regions. If his conduct was not in all respects equable and exemplary, it might fairly enough be questioned, what models were there for his guidance, or to what canons could he have referred? Our doctrines of morals, politics, and religion, had become very confused and problematical in those days. At all events, he was inflexibly steadfast to his party, the so-called Whigs; he was, as already said, a kind and considerate landlord, and was happy and munificently hospitable at home. But at that period the Whig party in Scotland carried out their tenets to a degree, in which their great leader, Charles Fox, did by no means set them any direct example. Being very safe from any awkward consequences to themselves,

they chose to adopt, in their daily discourse, the very wildest doctrines of the French revolution. Religion, of course, was derided, and the light of reason (so-called) must alone be acknowledged. But, unluckily, the said light did not shine with unerring brightness; it was woefully apt to be overclouded. And had there been established canons of reason which must be obeyed in practice for the good of all, I suspect this would have appeared an intolerable slavery. Every man's own notions were for him the light of reason, no matter how wild the notions might be, nor how little he weighed his premises before coming to a conclusion. In short, to be a Whig in Scotland too often implied being a follower not precisely of Charles James Fox, but of Voltaire, Mirabeau, and Tom Paine. Truly, this was a most exemplary school wherein to educate a young man of large fortune! But to his honour, be it recorded, that Mr. Maule, in these respects, was by no means a docile or forward pupil, and though he listened to such enlightened Whigs often enough, yet their *ultra*-doctrines were never adopted nor supported by him.

As well as I can remember, one leading trait of Lord Panmure's early character (I don't speak of 1794 merely, but of years following), was his acute sense of the absurd and the ridiculous. Blending

with this, or rather being the same thing, was the pleasure he seemed to take in the utter amazement and even consternation which his vagaries excited in the minds of the uninitiated and of the community. "Eh, sirs! Hech me! What will Mr. Maule do next, I wonder?" were words that might frequently be heard, after a staring, gaping recapitulation of last night's, or the same morning's early unparalleled exploits.

Among these was pertinaciously recorded — though it merited no such preference—the circumstance of his having driven a hearse along the public streets of Dundee, with the dead body of the Laird of Duntrune (dead *pro tem.*) inside. Of course such an event could not escape being talked of at the time. The hearse had four horses; Mr. Maule himself was charioteer, and this took place about ten o'clock in the forenoon. The fact, however, was not commented on, as it was not so generally known, that upon the same occasion Mr. Maule had invited to breakfast my worthy old friend, Father Pepper, of the Scotch Benedictine Monastery at Würtzburg, who then resided at Dundee, this monk having repeatedly declined the great man's invitations to dinner. Father Pepper was in the habit of rising at four in the morning, so could without inconvenience attend a summons to breakfast at nine. It is almost superfluous to

observe that for Mr. Maule the breakfast was merely a variety or prolongation of the previous day's banquet, and that, as usual, he had been up all night. As usual, too, his guests had all fallen, or been carried off one by one, till he was left "alone in his glory."

On his entrance, Mr. Pepper found prepared for his entertainment at table, literally all that the inn could produce. Tea, coffee, chocolate, cakes, marmalade, pies, broiled fish, cold meat, jellies and creams, were ostentatiously displayed, and the kind-hearted jovial Mr. Maule, perfectly sober, cool, and collected, was ready to welcome him. I think I can yet hear the cheerful cadence, the jocund ring of his well-known voice, in pronouncing the ordinary words of salutation!

With his reverend guest, he then entered into conversation, as quietly and rationally as if the orgies of the preceding day had never been; and they soon got engaged in a learned discussion on the merits of the Stein wines of Bavaria, and the various wonders and treasures of "our abbey at Würtzburg," whereon Father Pepper, after his own fashion, could be right eloquent. In return, Mr. Maule favoured the clergyman with his own private notions on the folly and sinfulness of excess in wine, declaring that he had done his utmost to set an example of propriety and moderation to the

community around him, but in vain! "There," said he, opening the door of an adjoining room, wherein the Laird of Duntrune lay dead asleep, "there, for example, reverend father, is a man on whom the best of counsels has been thrown away. Exhort him, I entreat you, reverend sir; perhaps he will listen to your voice, animated by spiritual force, though he continues deaf to mine."

The monk, as may be expected, declined the task, and pleaded an engagement for ten o'clock exactly, which would oblige him to take his leave. Mr. Maule rang the bell abruptly, and desired to know if the hearse was at the door? On being answered in the negative, he reiterated his orders in a manner so significant, that the amazed attendants perceived clearly enough that he was in earnest.

"You dare to keep the clergyman waiting, you scoundrels," said Mr. M., "though I ordered that the vehicle should be in readiness an hour ago! Parade it instantly, d'ye hear, unless every one of you wishes particularly to lose his ears!"

It is scarcely needful to add, that the hearse with its four horses was brought to the door, and that Father Pepper, pleading his previous engagement, stole adroitly away. For the rest, it only remains to be told, that Duntrune's inanimate carcase was deposited in the car; that Mr. Maule, to the

wonder and consternation of all beholders, drove through the streets of Dundee, and afterwards, all the way to Duntrune House in the country, where the remains of the seemingly defunct laird were given in charge to his domestics. In this anecdote, I never could see much to admire. I think there is one far preferable, noticed in my "Humours of the North," and which I therefore shall take the liberty of reviving in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAIRD OF USAN. — HIS FORMALITY AND GRAVITY. — BECOMES ACQUAINTED WITH MR. MAULE. — THE LAIRD UNDERTAKES TO BREAK ALL THE CROCKERY-WARE WHICH CAN BE BROUGHT TO HIM IN THE MARKET-PLACE OF MONTROSE. — THIS TURNS OUT TO BE A FORMIDABLE TASK. — CHARLES HAY, LORD NEWTON.—HIS AMIABLE CHARACTER.—HIS GENEROSITY AND ECCENTRICITIES.

Be it recorded, then, that the Laird of Usan, near Montrose, had the reputation of being one of the most staid, sober, formal, *ultra*-wise gentlemen in the said neighbourhood. He was consequently no special favourite of Mr. Maule; and, besides, I rather think that Usan, in his wisdom, was of opposite politics, in other words, was an obstinate Tory.

But, notwithstanding all his wisdom and cautious habits, the Laird of Usan must needs patronize the Montrose races. It would have been unpatriotic and unneighbourly if he had refused to do this. On one occasion he accepted the office of steward of the said races, which lasted for a week. There were also daily club-dinners, and nightly balls and suppers, at which, for the first time, Usan was

brought into friendly *rapport* with Mr. Maule, whose mirth and conviviality had *mesmeric* attraction, and were irresistible. *Malgrè* previous resolutions, such was the force of example, that, towards the close of the week, one night at supper, Usan was induced to join heartily in a revel. Over punch, mulled-wine, and devils, he repeatedly proffered his hand to Mr. Maule, who accepted it with seeming urbanity, till at last (by what demon instigated, who can tell?) a most absurd bet was proposed, which hinged on the question whether Usan could break to *flinders*, within one hour, all the crockery-ware which could possibly be brought before him within that space of time?

The bet was for a considerable sum, and though the undertaking on Usan's part seemed very simple, yet there were some awkward and stringent conditions. Firstly, he must have no baton, nor other weapon of any sort, to assist him in the work of demolition. And secondly, the match must come off in the public market-place of Montrose, to-morrow afternoon, as an amusement (by way of "*bouquet*") after the last day's races. The unfortunate laird! he had avoided participating in Mr. Maule's orgies; he had kept himself, as usual, sober and discreet through the preceding week, only to fall into the snares of the tempter at its close. Mr. Maule, *more suo*, though exhilarated, was per-

fectly calm and unflushed by his potations; and the bet, with its conditions, were duly reduced to writing in duplicate.

During twelve long hours, there was indeed time enough for the Laird of Usan to become comparatively sober, and to regret the engagement which he had made. But, alas! he was duly reminded of it by some of Mr. Maule's friends next morning, found he had gone too far to recede, and so determined to abide by his contract, and, if possible, to win his wager. The most awkward part of the bargain, a copy of which he found in his pocket-book, was his being debarred the use of any destructive implement. But as an excellent precaution, he resolved to provide himself with an enormous pair of fisherman's boots, impenetrably strong, wherewith he could stamp about, and crush the crockery-ware, at the same time that he used his hands and arms. It was an admirable thought this, and he resolved to keep up good courage.

The races for the day took place and ended earlier than usual; and due notice having been given that an extraordinary exploit (no one exactly knew what) was to be performed in the market-place, not only the *élite* of the land, but the entire *canaille*, the whole mob of the neighbourhood, flocked thither. Alas, for poor Usan! During the whole twelve hours allowed him for bitter

reflection, his adversary had not been for a moment idle. In front of the Town-hall was erected a sort of hustings, or rather a stage, like that of a mountebank, upon which the hapless laird must demonstrate his activity; and at one end were seats for the umpires. The match must come off regularly. If Usan had worked on the ground, how could the judges have properly decided? No doubt the mob would have crowded on the arena; and was there any Scotch liberal, with all his professed zeal for *égalité*, who did not detest a rascally mob?

The laird of Usan was amazed, but without a word of remonstrance, he acquiesced in everything, suffering himself to be led by Mr. Maule, arm in arm, to the platform, the latter moving in a quick buoyant jog-trot, the former sulkily and unwillingly keeping up with him. But Usan rallied, on mounting the steps of the platform. Nay, he commenced his performances in grand style, almost with an air of *nonchalance* and defiance. Two large hampers had been hoisted up, and their contents rapidly disposed of. The plates, tea-services, and suchlike, he stamped upon and shivered with his heavy boots, whilst all the larger articles, tureens, jugs, ewers, and chamber utensils, were seized, one in each hand, and smashed over his head with charming vivacity.

Meanwhile, Mr. Maule stood on the platform,

retaining his usual calmness and amenity of countenance, not moving a muscle, but appearing seriously intent on the business before him, till at last, the hampers being emptied and their contents demolished, he burst out with the exclamation, "Bravo, Usan!" to which immediately afterwards he added: "*Now* for it!" Ten to one had been eagerly offered in favour of the laird, but, alas, his partizans little suspected the degree of activity that had been evinced by Mr. Maule, who, at an early hour, had sent round the town drummers, with a proclamation that the highest price in ready cash would be paid for all the crockery-ware (*Scotticé* "pigs") that could be collected in Montrose. The magazine of Mrs. Hume (ancestress of the present member) was entirely emptied, and other shops in like manner. Even in private houses contributions had been levied; and, to the astonishment of Usan, no sooner had he disposed of the first collection, than divers carts, loaded with full hampers, began to arrive from all quarters. The stage was soon crowded with materials. Usan might well feel alarmed at the formidable aspect which his destiny assumed

But he was a brave man, more disposed to wrath than timidity. Boldly then he renewed the attack, but had not conquered three of the numerous hampers ere he began to exhibit signs of distress.

He had come upon the stage in his ordinary precise costume, but his cocked hat had fallen off again and again; and now one of his friends, a *quasi* bottle-holder, suddenly plucked away both hat and wig, and replaced them by a red woollen night-cap. He also persuaded the laird to lay aside his coat. And then, indeed, commenced in earnest an exhibition such as never had been dreamed of in the town of Montrose, and surely has not been equalled since! It seemed quite obvious that no ordinary man could within an hour's time demolish such a quantity of crockery-ware as had been already collected. Besides, there was too much reason to believe that more would arrive.

But the laird of Usan was not an ordinary man. Having thrown off hat, wig, and coat, he was no longer himself; the organ of destructiveness was preternaturally developed; he became enraged to frenzy; he was possessed by a demon. Moreover, it seemed as if the mob, who now filled by thousands the market-place of Montrose were possessed also. If any wild young fellow; indeed, if any man in all the world rather than the staid, sober, formal laird of Usan had been the performer, their excitement no doubt would have been much less. But this venerable dignitary dancing in jack-boots like a maniac, among plates, ashets, bowls, butter-

boats, tureens, and tea-services, and smashing nameless articles over his head, his aspect moreover being inflamed and furious—oh, it was infectious, it was maddening! At length, their laughter became so wild and convulsive, that they could only give it vent by screams and yells. As often as the possessed old gentleman, dancing and stamping all the while, raised some of the stronger and heavier vessels in order to demolish them by collision in the air, so often did the town echo with acclamations:—"Weel done, Usan! That's your sort! At them again! More *pigs*, more *pigs!* Hooray, hooray!" And then succeeded the peals and yells of unparalleled laughter. The performer, I believe, did win his bet; but though Mr. Maule certainly intended nothing more than sheer mirth and ridicule, no doubt thinking that a starched old dignitary of the Tory school was fair game, I believe the consequences to the laird were no laughing matter. I have heard that he afterwards felt so bitterly ashamed of the exhibition he had made, that he could not bear to be seen in public, and in colloquial phrase, "never was his own man again."

With truth I have said that a volume would be more suitable than a chapter to record the anecdotes that might be remembered of Mr. Maule. But I write in haste, and have yet fifty years of my

own life to review and consider. Be it observed, however, that if any were to imagine from what I have already said of this distinguished character, that his early life was devoted exclusively to ridiculous pranks, and bacchanalian revels, the conclusion would be very wrong. On the contrary, he was then, and no doubt still is, a shrewd man, who never lost sight of Prudence, though he did not always walk visibly in her company. For many years, Lord Panmure might well be regarded as the leader of the Northern Whigs, and his hospitable mansion was a rallying point, not merely for wild revolutionists, the "friends of the people" forsooth, but for individuals of rank, education, and talent, to whom his conversation was attractive by its unaffected good humour and shrewd common sense. If, during a long life, he has at times betrayed defects and inconsistencies of character or conduct, who can wonder? Educated as heir-at-law to a large fortune, followed from the outset by flatterers, who, like the mob at Montrose, "applauded him to the echo," and for the most part surrounded by a society to whom he could not help feeling his own superiority, not merely by rank and fortune, but in intellect, what wonder is it, if being so placed, he had moods of waywardness, caprice, and egoism? Where, as I have said before, were the neighbouring examples for

his guidance, or the acknowledged canons to which he should appeal? In fact, a wealthy landowner may be regarded as a petty sovereign, who, as such, "can do no wrong;" and if he employs a cabinet council, it is usually composed of individuals, not only inferior to himself in talents, but too careful of their own self-interests, to utter the truth, when it happens to be distasteful to their powerful patron.

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How far I might extend these reminiscences of notable characters with whom my acquaintance, either personally or by hearsay, commenced in boyhood, I scarcely know. But before progressing to another era, I must add one more to my list of northern worthies; one whom I knew well, and for whose memory I cherish a sincere respect, namely, Charles Hay, afterwards Lord Newton, commonly known in the ranks of Whiggism by his *nom de guerre*, the "Michtie Goth." He was indeed, a man of immense bodily might and strength, six feet high, burly in proportion, but with an agreeable placid and intelligent cast of countenance. On him, the bacchanalian orgies of the day never produced any perceptibly injurious effects. His natural and every-day *quantum* of wine would have been more than enough for any two ordinary men.

As an advocate at the Scotch bar, Mr. Hay had considerable practice, and in working a difficult case, where research and sound knowledge of the law were needed, he bore the reputation of an excellent counsel. In public speaking, strange to say, he exhibited a manner oddly out of keeping with his iron nerves and Herculean frame. His manner, indeed, was hesitating, nervous, and tremulous, a circumstance which gave a peculiar effect to his speeches, for whatever the subject might be, it seemed as if the advocate was deeply and inwardly moved with the importance of the cause which he had on hand.

Not being dependent on professional pursuits for his income, Mr. Hay, had he thought proper, might have retired from public life: for his landed property alone afforded him a sufficient revenue. And to his honour be it recorded, that being thus prosperous in worldly estate he was also one of the most generous of men. Of this I remember a special instance, respecting which I speak as an eye-witness, when he transferred a pocket full of Scotch bank-notes (the sum was one thousand pounds) to a friend, who in classical phrase, was at the moment "hard-up." I recollect the transaction as if it was of yesterday. Travelling towards Aberdeen, he overtook this friend walking on the high-road, dismounted from his postchaise,

and joined him. After the ordinary salutations and news of the day, "By the by," said Charles Hay, "I have just been to your house, and I am glad of this chance meeting. You have been annoyed, I am told, by demands for cash, and you intend selling land. Don't be over-rash; for the acres, if once *disponed*, never come back again. Here 's a sheaf o' John Brand's bank-notes, that only *taigles* me to carry. Make use of them, I beg, till times grow better, and mind, I 'll come at kale-time on my way back from Aberdeen. If you need another sheaf o' notes *then*, I 'll have them ready."

That the loan so kindly afforded was faithfully repaid I hope it is needless to say; but this did not happen till many years afterwards, and it never was claimed. Had bill or bond been ever proffered for the money, Charles Hay's feelings would have been seriously hurt. All transactions of this kind he kept in profound secrecy. "If ever I should be in want of money," said he, "I shall not fail to acquaint you, and ask your advice. Let that be our bargain, and now, no more about it."

Notwithstanding his own wish for entire secrecy, his generous disposition became so well-known, that it exposed him to many applications, a share of which, as might be expected, he did repulse. Of such repulses I remember only one, which

was in the case of a fat office-bearer, who with an income of some hundreds per annum for doing little or nothing, must needs call on Charles Hay, then Lord Newton, requesting the interposition of his lordship's influence, inasmuch as his salary was too low, and to make him comfortable he must have at least two hundred pounds additional. There was no need for making a secret of this, and I remember Lord Newton himself said that K. W—— had been with him, pleading poverty and claiming a *good word*, "as if," added his lordship, "I did not know that he has more already than he needs or deserves; but I said *no* to him very terribly; and of course he will think me an enemy, and remember me with a grudge."

About the same date, I recollect the case of a very poor author, a poor poet forsooth, for whose vocation, as such, the learned judge no doubt had the utmost contempt. I remember this man coming from his lordship's house, and without betrayal that he had himself been assisted, asseverating with broken voice, that if there were at Edinburgh two or three more such good men as Lord Newton, he believed that distress and want would there be done away with altogether. It will be allowed, I think, that this judge is the most remarkable person I have yet noted. To be rich, and at the same time generous, is indeed a most

singular phasis of character. Never once did he complain like most of his fraternity (the rich, I mean) that the demands on him were so constant, and the cases of distress so numerous, that really he could not interfere any further. This was regarded by Charles Hay as a sort of cant which he thoroughly despised.

As a literary man, he was below par, or rather was a nullity. He had no books but his legal folios and quartos; and excepting the newspapers, I doubt if any contemporaneous publications ever engaged his attention. The "Edinburgh Review" always found its way to his table; but notwithstanding his regard for his young friends, "Frank Jeffrey and Harry Brougham," I suspect he did not read it. During his intervals of relaxation from professional duties, he showed an almost ridiculous fondness for certain games, at which, he would willingly have played, morning, noon, and night. Bowls and golf were his favourites, but the former requires a lawn or platform specially fashioned for the purpose, and I think there are not many such about Edinburgh. The best I have seen is that adjoining Dalkeith House. For golf there is always a delightful ground at Bruntisfield Links; but the enjoyment of it requires fine weather, and the performance needs too much agility for one of Lord Newton's enormous weight

in his latter years. Failing such open air diversions, he would with the most patient pertinacity devote himself day after day to whist, *picquet*, or backgammon. Chess he detested, as being not a diverting relaxation, but a study, which was the very thing he wished to escape from and avoid. But having once secured a willing companion over the picquet-table, he was entirely contented, forgot everything else in the world, in short was like Tam o' Shanter, "owre a' the ills o' life victorious." Even against the jostling of a postchaise, if he had a travelling comrade, he sometimes essayed to keep up the game.

Among his minor peculiarities was one which afforded a never-failing source of mirth at convivial parties; namely, his lordship entertained an absolute detestation of the performances of professed wits and punsters. I believe their artistical efforts did really wound his feelings, being so completely discordant with that tone of perfect simplicity and *abandon* which prevailed in his own discourse; consequently, when a pun was perpetrated in his presence, instead of laughing, he knitted his brows and looked ferocious, in silent contempt for the delinquent. The diversion after dinner consisted in elaborating as many execrable puns as possible, and admiring their effects on his lordship's wrathful visage, till at last, overcome by some spasmodic

effort or desperate failure of the would-be punster, he himself joined in the mirth.

How often during long wintry days have I noticed his calm contemplative features, near the fire-side, with some one companion at the card-table, having his oblong gold snuff-box (an old and battered one) beside him, out of which he helped himself to enormous pinches! Lord Newton, it is almost needless to say, enjoyed the conviviality of the dinner or supper table. Of him it is recorded, among antiquated jokes, at Edinburgh, that while walking homeward somewhat unsteadily about nine o'clock on a fine summer evening, a friend accosted him in the words: "Why, how 's this, Mr. Hay? You 're early up from your dinner to-day?" "True enough," replied the advocate, "but then ye maun ken, we sat down *yesterday*."

At that epoch, a protraction of the same banquet from day to day, or, in legal phrase, "with continuation of days," was not unusual. The members of the party were allowed to sleep either in their chairs or on the floor, as they thought fit, and on awakening, resumed their social duties. None were considered blameworthy, except those who abdicated the field altogether.

"Wha last beside his chair shall fa',
He is the king amang us three!"

Sometimes it did happen that a death suddenly took place among the party, but the event was not considered of sufficient importance to interrupt the orgies.

"Powsieflat's looking unco *gash*," (*Anglicè* wise), observed a guest, awakening from a slumber, and pointing to his opposite neighbour in an elbow chair.

"He may weel be looking gash," said the host, "for he 's been wi' his Maker these three hours." In plainer terms, the elbow chair had for the last three hours been tenanted by a dead body.

CHAPTER VII.

EGOTISM EXCUSABLE AND NECESSARY, BUT NOT EGOISME.—ADVANTAGES OF A COUNTRY LIFE.—DISQUISITION ON PLANTING CABBAGES.—THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION, AND ON THE DUTIES OF A LAND-OWNER.—THE AUTHOR ILLUSTRATES HIS OPINIONS BY REFERRING TO THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF ROBERT SOUTHEY.

I KNOW not, of course, what my reader may think, but I have myself become heartily wearied of anecdotes such as that relating to Powsieflat, which has just now been repeated, and which, in my judgment, are the chaff and rubbish of recollections. They serve to indicate the still barbarous manners of a *soi-disant* civilized era, and this is all.

I was advised to insert such, and, accordingly, *les voilà!* But it is time to strike another key-note. To own the truth, I have no very pleasant or favourable recollections of early life, except those drawn from the mere country itself, from the landscape, and the varieties of light and colour thereon, and from such books as I was capable of understanding.

I set out with my very earliest recollections, namely, those of a severe winter passed in the country, anno 1794-95; and with these traces, faint as they are, revives in all its force my sincere attachment to a retired and rural life. Autobiography, I think, ought to be (indeed, to have any interest, *must* be) egotistic, though not *egoistic*, meaning by this last expression arrogant or self-complacent. I can safely aver in my own behalf, and it is no very vehement self-eulogy, that no mortal ever existed, who, during the course of a long life, was more fervently and consistently attached than I have been to *home*, to his native country, and to retirement. For nearly twenty-three years I have lived in exile; have been, properly speaking, homeless, and for the greater part of that time subjected to incessant anxiety and persecution. But of this afterwards, and in its due place.

I have spoken in my first chapter of the pleasures of a country life. From an early age, it appeared to me through a medium very different from that by which others seemed to regard it. Surely enough, it was for me, the *rus verum*, but for what assignable reason it should of necessity be *rus barbarum*, I could not tell. *Why* was the rudeness of the inhabitants to be ascribed to the retired and beautiful scenes in which they so

stupidly dragged on their existence? Was this rudeness any inevitable consequence of their position among the quiet woods, fields, mountains, lakes, and rivers? Was there no civilization, no light of intellect in the secluded island of Iona, when its abbey and monastery flourished?

I had intended to notice, among other matters, the state of education in the north of Scotland, anno 1794, but, methinks, after the charming examples I have already given, drawn from the *soumités* of society, it is hardly needful to say more. At all events, it may very easily be supposed that with such brilliant examples (which are better than precept) around him, a young man's education would soon become quite perfect!

Lord Byron enjoyed these influences in his earliest years, and profited accordingly.

Among many sage and delightful aphorisms respecting education, which I have been accustomed to hear inculcated, none, I believe, had a more injurious effect on my fates and fortunes than the following:—"It is necessary always to make choice of some profession, and a young man, however independent, should not sit down to plant cabbages!" Now, in this precious adage, is usually comprehended or understood a sneer against the situation and occupations of a country gentleman living on his own hereditary acres.

But I do not know any station in life, which, if it be properly considered, has more important and complicated duties than that of the hereditary land-owner. And, at the same time, I am not aware of any situation more enviable in regard to the opportunities it affords for fulfilling such duties with comfort and happiness to the responsible performer. Barring the evils of civil war, pestilence, famine, and such like, his income (thanks to his humble tenants and labourers) goes on whilst he sleeps. *They* may have anxieties, heaven knows, in order to fulfil their allotted tasks, and to keep body and soul together, this alone being a hard task too often! If, for a week, or even for a day, sickness, or other causes, should keep the labouring hand from the wheel, the machinery of well-being stops *for them.* Not so with the landlord. Barring misrule in higher quarters, and national calamities as above named, barring also excessive dishonesty in his steward (*Scotticè*, "factor"), *he* might indulge in a seven years' sleep, and yet awake to find that his rents had unremittingly accumulated.

Now, with all these advantages, has this man no special duties therewith connected, no responsibility devolved on him? If he degrades himself by voluntary indolence and systematic imbecility into a state of mere *cabbageism*, is this imputable to

his situation? In other words, is it a necessary *sequitur*, that because a man has means to live or vegetate, without labour or thought, he should become almost as incapable of either as one of his own overfed farm stock?

I repeat that the condition of a country gentleman having what is called independence, that is, a competent income arising from hereditary acres, has always appeared to me most enviable. This impression was fixed long before my own estates were lost. But if the man so situated is not by nature gifted with faculties that could be improved, and if he be obstinately unwilling to work, then surely to recommend him a profession would be very absurd. *Cabbageism*, after all, is the inevitable and only state for such a being. If, however, he possesses any such faculties, if he has propensity or talent for any useful pursuit under the sun, then the quiet, the retirement, the liberty, the opportunity for sustained and consecutive application afforded in the country, constitute advantages for him which no other situation could admit in the same degree. He needs not to travel in search of instructors in town, for the attraction of *argent comptant* will readily bring them into the country.

It may be alleged that the benefits of good advice and emulation cannot be had in retirement, —a somewhat illogical conclusion, seeing that to

support this *dictum*, we must impute disadvantages to a country life which do not of necessity belong thereto. Public schools and great towns, however, we are pertinaciously told, are the "hotbeds of talent," where men of genius, or without any genius, by collision assist one another (though it must be owned, the gleams of light elicited by such collision are often illusory and transient). But life remote from towns, though quiet, need not be too solitary. Men of talents, as I have already hinted, can easily enough be allured from almost any distance to the hospitable mansion of the independent landowner. Besides, if it be not quite necessary that a country squire who resides on his estate should decline into *cabbageism*, neither is it one jot more necessary that he should wholly abstain from visiting large towns, and deriving from thence all the aid which these *soi-disant* hotbeds (better say, *marts*) of talent can afford him.

So long as, like my Lord Gardenstone, the squire can boast of having "crowns in his purse," there is no reason to doubt that he will be cordially received in the city's magic circles. He may keep a town-house even; I don't object to that. All I wish to contend for in this long disquisition is, that a country life should not be underrated and misrepresented. This is but a negative

proposition which need hardly provoke dispute: and I am farther thoroughly persuaded that every wise proprietor of an hereditary estate will make it an object of his affections *as home*, also that he will regard it as the scene of his most important duties; his most recondite and laborious studies, as well as of his relaxation and best pleasures. Let the home of the man who would surpass his contemporaries in any difficult pursuit, be where it may, he must *at first* have a good share of tranquillity and solitude. The slaves of the factory may work in herds; they have no leisure individually to carry out their own thoughts; they cannot even reflect on their own hard case; but the original contriver of that complicated machinery required at the outset the protection and quiet of his own solitary cell.

It seems marvellous, when we look back into the records of former ages, how very nearly some eccentric and isolated characters of those times had approached to some of the most remarkable and lucrative discoveries of modern date. In fact, the discoveries were made then: it was for want only of sufficient means and appliances for *carrying out* their plans, that these ingenious men failed or stumbled on the threshold. Among such examples, we find that a recluse monk, named Kircher, more than two centuries ago, by

dint of his own pertinacious and lonely efforts, did arrive on the brink of some of our most vaunted physical inventions. But though he had perhaps the advantages of continuous study and seclusion (in his convent, I mean), this man,—yet not having been able to include the philosopher's stone among his discoveries, he was, of course, sadly deficient as to the benefit derivable from the country squire's independent fortune. In other words, we may believe that solitude and consecutive labour did much in his case, but he could not live long enough, nor had means and apparatus enough to carry out his own views, and it appears the "stand-stock-still" party were numerous in his days as they certainly were in 1794. Parenthetically, it may be observed, that if any clever *famulus*, or immediate successor, having repeated the old monk's course of study, could have planted himself at an early age on the same ground which Kircher left, and progressed therefrom, considerable results might have been insured. But brother monks and other recluses were probably in a state of *cabbageism;* and contemporary men of the world were as usual too much occupied with schemes of ambition and pleasure, or with fierce contention for daily bread, to think of groping through a long series of doubtful experiments. They could not possibly find leisure for

consecutive researches like those of the good old Jesuit.

Thus matters dragged on from age to age. Some lonely spirit, like Athanasius Kircher, humble, yet pertinacious and obstinate, with his lamp and furnace gleaming at midnight, shot far a-head in certain departments. But the light that he diffused was soon lost again. Nobody came directly afterwards to trim the monk's midnight lamp, and take his laborious place. As I have said, recluses were then, as now, too often in a state of *cabbageism*; and then also, as now, there were examples of poor men contriving to find isolated and quiet abodes even in the heart of the city, where they endeavoured to mature their discoveries, having a hard struggle meanwhile for mere existence. I know that there have been and must be such examples. I do not deny that the poor man may sometimes have a better chance of earning his daily bread in the city than in the remote country. What I contended for was, not to underrate the peculiar advantages of life in town, but to insist on the duties and responsibilities that devolve on the wealthy landowner. If the hasty remarks which I have already made on the subject of education apply justly enough to the cultivation of the physical sciences, how much more to pursuits moral and metaphysical, above all, to those of the literary man!

It is a special comfort to the scribbler of reminiscences, that when his argument either hitches or becomes tiresome, he can always help himself out by an example drawn from experience. And having so much insisted on the advantages of a country life for a literary man, I am irresistibly reminded of the admirable example afforded in this respect by the late Robert Southey.

Apparently gifted with all advantages that best qualify a young man for professional pursuits, with a firm constitution, prepossessing features and winning address, he yet, in early life, formed his decided choice. He would have no profession whatsoever but that of literature, which is usually regarded as none at all; and, instead of seeking his home and *sanctum* in the neighbourhood of Paternoster Row, he determined to live or die—to abide for better or worse—in the wilds of Westmorland. As I have said, he formed this choice very early in life, and he did so in defiance of the fact staring him in the face, that he had no hereditary acres, no patrimonial mansion there, or anywhere else, to which he could cleave as his home.

In this respect Southey far transcended my preceding doctrines, for though he determined on settling in the country, his "whole estate," according to his own expression, "was in his ink-

stand." He might well have considered it needful to make a fortune in town before he "sat down to plant cabbages;" and with his talents employed in legal and political contests, in the clerical, medical, or military profession, or, best of all, in a city counting-house, instead of his own study, he might of course have risen to high honours and the possession of great wealth." Oh yes, there could be no doubt of that! As usual, on such occasions, there were not wanting *friends*, who said "it was not merely foolish, but seriously culpable in a great degree. Robert Southey, with his abilities, and at his time of life, setting himself down in the remote country to plant cabbages! It was absolutely sinful to hide and bury his good gifts in that way."

Now, cities in their own glaring and ostentatious, but at the same time murky and deceptive way, are vastly good. But I doubt whether any man who has ever buffeted the waves of life in its crowded haunts, ever carried out a system of more joyous consistent industry than Southey did for thirty years and more in his retirement. He had elbow-room, he had peace of mind and liberty, and with these advantages he practised frugality, despised luxury, and led a life of indefatigable labour. But, as I have said above, it was joyous labour; it seemed natural to him; he had chosen his mode of life, and he loved it.

His long and valuable works advanced slowly, because he always had different tasks on hand, and like a thorough-bred man of business, could at any time turn from one to another; but they advanced unremittingly; they were not scrawled and patched up *invitâ Minervâ*, careless of all but the citizen's only object, to obtain immediate pelf: but they were finished so as to gain the author's approbation in the first place. Among his minor peculiarities I cannot but remember how in his unequalled calligraphy, he revived the accomplishment of monastic scribes in the middle ages, and how in divers instances he completed a long MS., bound it handsomely, and kept it for years on his shelves, before he thought of publication. *Labor ipsa voluptas erat*, even without one particle of pecuniary gain. Of whatever advantages the external world could afford him, Southey was by no means unmindful. He had the unrivalled scenery of Cumberland and Westmorland always inviting him to such exercise out of doors as fortifies the nervous system for laborious application. Perhaps he said with Pressnitz, "*Man muss Gebirge haben.*" He could have the society, when he wished for it, of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lloyd, the Watsons, Wilson, and De Quincey, than whom it would scarcely have been possible in all the world to find a literary fraternity

exhibiting greater diversities of individual character.

He made his annual visits to London in the season, where, of course, he was received and *fêted* as a lion. Such he continued to be; there was no risk of the "great world" becoming too intimate or familiar *with him*. In London, of course, he met contemporary authors, and made fresh acquisitions of old books; but according to his own avowal, his principal pleasure whilst in town, was in the anticipation of the happiness that awaited him on returning to his own fireside. *There*, to use again his own words, "he lived upon his own stores (of books, namely) which were, perhaps, more ample than had ever before been possessed by one whose whole estate was in his inkstand."

I have often thought of this *naïve* and forcible expression, when I heard literature derided and scorned as a profession. His excellent tact and unremitting industry enabled him to realise a good income for a long series of years out of that aforesaid estate, which "upon 'Change" would be considered the worst of investments, and this without in any one instance stooping to the use of those arts *ad captandum*, which have latterly become so prevalent among English authors. The following lines may be taken as autobiographical, for the

author had evidently written them with fervent sincerity:—

"My days among the dead are past,
Around me I behold,
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
The mighty minds of old.
My never-failing friends are they,
With whom I converse day by day.

* * *

"My thoughts are with the dead; with them
I live in long-past years;
Their virtues love, their faults condemn,
Partake their hopes and fears,
And from their lessons seek to find
Instruction with a humble mind.

"My hopes are with the dead; anon,
My place with them will be;
And I with them shall travel on,
Through all eternity;
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
That will not perish in the dust."

I have taken the more special interest in Southey's attachment to a retired and studious life, because his decision of character and single-heartedness in that respect were so publicly tried. In his latter years, before any serious illness or family afflictions had befallen him, whilst he still possessed in full vigour his admirable faculties, a seat in parliament was urged on his acceptance. Some of his personal friends, I suppose, were then in power, and were well convinced how valuable

his co-operation and suggestions might be to them. It is to be presumed they held out the usual inducements. If he accepted the proffered seat, of course, place, pension, rank and title (who knows?) might follow. Yes, *might* follow, it was quite possible. But for all this, the late Poet Laureate, though not then enjoying the notable 100*l.* per annum and butt of sherry, cared not a rush, and on this ground, he seems to me specially deserving of honour. In a letter which appeared in the newspapers of the day he respectfully indicated his appreciation of the distinction offered to his acceptance; but he needed no time to deliberate. He at once and firmly refused it, the principal reasons assigned being that his time and strength were already bespoken and pledged to certain self-imposed duties, and that life in London and attendance in parliament would completely disorganise his domestic habits and literary plans. His "lares and penates" were among the mountains and lakes of Westmorland, and he would not consent to transplace them, or to forsake his quiet home.

CHAPTER VIII.

RENEWED DISQUISITION ON THE DUTIES OF LAND-OWNERS. — EFFECTS OF RULE AND MISRULE. — LANDSCAPE SCENERY. — CHARACTER OF A HAPPY LANDLORD. — POETICAL GENIUS IN THE FAR NORTH. — BYRON AND BEATTIE. — EULOGY OF THE LATTER. — DR. ALEXANDER GEDDES.

I REFERRED to Southey, as affording an instance of life most honourably, industriously, and successfully spent in retirement. He chose his position remote from cities, and perseveringly maintained it; though his "estate was in his ink-stand." But I had intended to speak more at large of those onerous duties which devolve on landed proprietors, on men of hereditary acres, and to argue more pertinaciously, that if their order be really degraded into a state of selfish indolence and *cabbage-ism*, the blame rests on themselves, not on their situation, though it may be among remote fields and forests.

According to conventional laws of England, not perhaps over exemplary, but which have actually become more stringent and better understood than

those of Magna Charta, our wealthiest men are always upheld for the best and wisest. If, by wonderful chance, they betray some defects in character, hundreds of tongues will be alert in proffering excuses for such aberrations, not one of whom would suggest the merest *iota*, in defence of a poor brother, fallen into poverty. And according to the practical wisdom of our wealthy landlord, in most instances, there is some reason to infer or suspect that he regards his lands, tenants, and dependents, solely and exclusively as means for his own well-being and pleasures. On the other hand, supposing he can, by any lucky chance, be induced to study the condition of those dependents, and consider how far their lot may be improved, and if he can be led to reflect how far his own precious interest will be promoted by such improvement, then, doubtless, his character assumes forthwith a very different phasis.

I have spoken in jest of Lord Gardenstone having enacted the part of a petty sovereign, but I do seriously insist, that the situation of a king is not more responsible as to its duties than that of the country squire. There is a difference betwixt them no doubt. The welfare of thousands or millions of people may depend on the good or bad conduct of the one; that of scores, or hundreds, as the case may be, on the management of the other.

The squire may indeed have reason to complain of bad legislation on the part of the crown or government under which he lives; but he has only himself to blame, if there be faults in the legislation of his own making, which he applies in managing his estates and tenants.

In the same county, under the same climate, under the same crown, what contrasts may we not see afforded by the condition of one man's estate and tenantry, compared with those of his neighbour! In the one case, how hideous and repulsive are the consequences of misrule; in the other, how cheering the effects of that energy and prudence which apply not merely to the temporary wants and indulgences of precious self, or of a narrow clique, but to the permanent well-being of a community! In one case, the natural beauty of the scene obscured and desolated; almost you wonder that the blessed sun ever shines there; fences broken, plantations neglected, venerable trees mercilessly felled in order to supply means for the "necessary" expenses of town life, or, perhaps, *soi-disant* professional life; cottages half ruinous, farm-houses, from whence it is obvious the light of cheerfulness has long since departed: the visages of all the inhabitants, whether old or young, clouded and dispirited; some, however, exhibiting the variety of a vicious and morbid excitation, a

ruffianly air of resentment and defiance, as if sternly calling heaven to witness that it is not wholly their own fault, and that injustice and misrule have brought them to this pass! No, there is no hope for such an estate or such tenantry, unless the present owner, as is not unlikely, alienates the whole in favour of some new proprietor who may possibly exhibit an opposite character.

In the same county, as I have said, perhaps within a mile, you may enter on a scene, where, from the park-gate onwards, at every turning of your path, the eye only meets objects and indications that are cheering and encouraging. Consider even the said park-gate. At this entrance, you have no masses of stone and mortar ostentatiously and arrogantly perking out upon the highway, and sustaining ponderous barriers of iron. On the contrary, we find here that a due respect has been entertained for natural copse-wood scenery. Instead of the elaborate stone and lime-work, we have masses of sheltering wood on each side of the gate. A wide semicircular sweep has been fashioned by the woodman's axe, and the diminutive simple gate, with its porter's lodge, recedes far from the highway.

It is an attractive cottage, that porter's lodge! Never were vines trained more picturesquely than are the eglantine and clematis athwart these win-

dows. The gable-walls have each a flourishing fruit-tree. Altogether, it is a subject for a picture, this cottage, but I do not remember in all the world any artist, among the living or dead, who could have rendered it justice so well as De Hoog. He could, or else no one. It is an old and infirm man who tenants the lodge, yet *malgré* his age and infirmities, he seems a very model of contentment. His grandchildren are about him. The very least of them can be safely trusted to open the gate, which, in its own rude way, is nevertheless as perfect a machine as the best chronometer from Cornhill. Being so nicely swung, it responds to the slightest touch. And I do believe these grandchildren (the boys I mean) make a point of always wearing caps on their heads, precisely that they may be ready to show how gracefully they can doff them at the entrance of any visitor.

Passing through this gate, and as you emerge on the park, if you cherish any lively regard for the principles of beauty in the landscape, or of good common sense in the management of ground, you must be interested and cheered by the scene. If there be no traces of neglect or misrule here, as little is there any frippery of ornament. Bold masses of thriving wood cover every steep acclivity, or other portion of ground which would neither produce good crops nor pastures, nor admit

the plough. The Laird of Brucks, with his stone dykes, has never been admitted here. The fences are either *ha ha's* or invisibles, and all are in the most perfect repair. If you meet a petty farmer, labourer, or woodman, he will not pass without a cheerful salutation, venturing, perhaps, before replacing his hat, to add the words, "A fine day, your honour." Instead of which, on the miserable domain which we have just left, the gait of every such passenger was a sullen slouch, and, as he tramped by, you might hear a revengeful groan or muttered curse growling in his throat.

It is almost superfluous to say that the proprietor and his family here are fixed residenters on their own estate, that they look upon it as their only home, and that to render this a happy home to themselves, they must consider also the welfare and contentment of those by whom they are surrounded and served. The result is, that no heroic chieftain of old times, when the system of vassalage held full force, was ever more respected than this laird, though most of his adherents are not bound to him by any other vassalage than that which arises out of their own good will. They have unchangeable faith in his firmness and decision of character; they have all been made to comprehend the principles by which he was guided,

and, therefore, by what means they can secure his favour and approbation.

He is no mystic philosopher or dreaming poet, this man. I could not uphold him as such. Rather, I suspect, he is devoted to the exact and physical sciences, to chemistry, agriculture, landscape-gardening, horticulture, and such like; but he is ingenious, inventive, and profoundly skilled in all these. He might be sneered at as a "book-farmer," were it not well known that he is not a book-farmer merely. Being a thoroughly good accountant, he fails not to square his own expenses, and avoid the risk of being obliged to mortgage a single acre. No knight-errant of old was ever more jealous of his Dulcinea's reputation, than is our good laird of his estate's entire purity from the plague-spot of a *wadset*.

Yet, notwithstanding his economy, he contrives to keep a moderate lodging in town, and goes thither once a year, or when he thinks fit, in order to avail himself of whatever improvements the scientific world can suggest. Moreover, he has two or three friends there, practical men of a high grade, who are most ready to accept his hospitable invitations, and assist cordially in his amateur experiments. I am very sure that no member of Parliament or minister of State was ever more protected against the blue devils of *ennui*, than this

country squire. He runs not the slightest risk of subsiding into a state of indolénce and torpor. On the contrary, he seems to realize the Irishman's favourite benediction, which too often sounds like a mere idealism, "May you live all the days of your life!" He seems naturally and resolutely bent to *live* all his days, not to sleep, dream, and muddle them away in a state of *cabbageism*. Probably I shall revert to the character of the happy landlord more than once in these memoirs. At present I must for a little while try back again to the winter of 1794, or rather to the associations therewith connected.

I date the beginning of my recollections from the county of Kincardine in the north of Scotland, and from almost all I have written as yet, these northern regions may possibly have appeared to the reader as no better than a wild savage country inhabited by ignorant, wild, wayward, and savage people! Very different, indeed, is its character in my estimation. If it had its wild and gloomy districts, the fostering sun shone on them no less than on its gardens and meadows, and the light of poetic genius had mingled with our sunlight. Let this assertion be corroborated by only two examples—never mind how different in rank—Byron and Beattie. "Childe Harold," however vehemently, I might say, violently different, is yet, after all,

a remaniement of the "Minstrel" (though the poem was not on this account one *iota* less original). Byron, it is true, owed his earliest inspirations to scenes not within the limits of Kincardineshire, but to arrive at his particular *locale*, it was only requisite to take what the present Laird of Ury would reckon a moderate morning's walk into an adjoining county. His lordship's first interviews with the muses, as is well known, took place in the vicinity of "dark Loch-na-gar," and Beattie's poetical talents would never have been developed had it not been for his lonely walks on the wild hill of Garvock. According to Burns:—

> "The Muse? Nae poet ever fand her,
> 'Till by himsel' he learn'd to wander,
> Adown some trotting burn's meander,
> And no' think lang.
> How sweet to stray and pensive ponder
> A heartfelt sang!"

The poetical character is one and the same, and has the same elementary principles, be it exemplified in peer, professor, or ploughman.

For the memory of James Beattie, LL.D., Professor of Moral Science at Aberdeen, I have always cherished especial regard and respect. One of his intimate connections, the late John Glennie, A.M., Minister of Dunnottar (son of Lord Byron's tutor Dr. Glennie), was my instructor and friend during many years, and the scenes which the poet

has so beautifully described in the "Minstrel," form part of the district with which I was familiar from infancy.

As already hinted, the two poets, Byron and Beattie, may seem so widely different, that it is ridiculous to name them together. Take the one as a humble schoolmaster, and afterwards professor at Aberdeen, and the other as a rakish young lord, a modern edition of Rochester, *a knowing one*, forsooth, who had travelled, and seen the world, and no doubt they were widely different. Moreover, take Beattie as a man who, according to his habits and principles, never composed either prose or verse without a pure ennobling purpose; and *per contra*, take Byron, who sneered alike at *morale* and religion; whose leading object seemingly was to magnify his own self-importance; to multiply portraits of himself under numberless disguises, and to make a stupid world stare, then truly the two characters were utterly different. Yet, in so far as both were poets, unquestionably they were alike. In their enjoyment of the same or of similar wild landscapes; in their propensity to see therein what others could not or would not see; in their powers of imparting what they thus felt and beheld, of conserving it "for all time," in musical language—as poets in short, they were alike and allied.

Of Byron I have no personal remembrances whatsoever, unless a minor, I should rather say, *infinitesimal* incident might be classed as such—namely, that I have seen the juvenile portrait of his lordship, which has never been engraved. In the year 1795, Mr. Kaye, jun., of Edinburgh, finding the *res angustæ domi* somewhat hard to bear, wisely walked away in order to push his fortune by taking, so-called, likenesses in the country. He favoured us with a visit, and made three portraits, which he begged leave to carry with him to Aberdeen for exhibition there. Returning faithfully with his works, Mr. Kaye exhibited my portrait in duplicate; for as to likeness in either case I fancy little could be said. The style in both was identical, and the other was the now lost portrait of Lord Byron. Each exhibited a full-length of a juvenile with flowing locks, also with bow and arrows in hand, and there was a background, made up of some excessively green trees, having curiously round leaves: lastly, in the distance, a spacious country-house or castle. Mine existed till the year 1827, when it vanished, with numberless better things, into the world of shadows.

To regret the absence of personal remembrances of Lord Byron would surely be very needless, for we have had them already in all shapes and in

countless volumes. From his school and college companions, betwixt the years 1794 and 1798, I have heard divers anecdotes, all hinging on examples of that wayward temper and irritability, which accompanied him through his short but unequalled career, and which, no doubt, were owing partly to vicious education and partly to morbid sensibility common to the poetical character, although this last, in his favourite part of *nonchalant* coxcomb, or man of the world, his lordship afterwards affected utterly to repudiate and despise. See his remarks on my poor obscure self as a "half-wild" authorling, in a notice of the "Ruminator," by Sir E. Brydges ("Journal," in Moore's Life of Lord Byron, anno 1813). Truly, the education afforded him by our so-called "great world," however it might be varied, was, upon analysis, not much better than that of his boyhood at Aberdeen. Among his lordship's numerous acquaintances where was there one really congenial spirit? By whom among them was he ever equalled, far less surpassed, unless it were by one in his own character, always isolated, persecuted, and traduced, namely—Shelley?

Doctor Beattie, as every one knows, was the son of a poor farmer at Lord Gardenstone's village of Laurencekirk. Like almost every other poet of whom I have heard or read, he was in early life

surrounded by people whose character and habits were the most opposite possible and uncongenial to his own, and had to struggle, as he best could, in his own lonely way. The light of genius has, for good reasons, been styled by Burns and others, a "light from heaven," seeing that it has made its appearance in situations which, so far as earthly advantages are concerned, are the last wherein one would look for such a gift. In the poor oppressed peasant you may sometimes discover superiority of intellect and a nobility of soul, whilst in his neighbour or landlord—the rich proprietor, who had all the benefits of scholastic education, and might live for the Muses if he chose—you meet, perhaps, only a drunken savage, with little more pretensions to intellectual power than the wildest Hottentot! As to good Lord Gardenstone, he surely was no savage. He was, however, so much astonished at the fact that the farmer's son could write original poetry, that he shrewdly doubted whether it might not be borrowed; so one day, finding the youth writing with a pencil in a lonely glen, he set him a task of Latin verses to be translated into rhyme. This was accomplished, and his lordship doubted no longer; but I have never heard that any result of much advantage to the poet arose from the discovery. Gardenstone, I believe, was remarkably impassive both

to poetry and metaphysics, though it is on record that he sometimes quoted "Hudibras" with considerable *gusto*.

According to Dr. Johnson's elegant and euphonious expression, scarcely any Scotchman had a bellyful of learning in those days, yet very many had a mouthful, and the author of the "Minstrel" made so much of his limited portion, and improved it so much by his own solitary researches, that he soon far excelled all his youthful contemporaries, and he did this lovingly, for he was both by nature and culture a most amiable man and hard-working student. Now, *malgré* Johnson's prejudices, it must be owned that in his remark there was a good share of truth. Such characters as that of young Beattie were then extremely rare in Scotland; and it was therefore not to be wondered at if Lord Errol and a few others interposed powerfully a "good word" in behalf of the farmer's son, and raised him from being usher of a grammar-school to the chair of Moral Philosophy at Aberdeen.

If the king had offered him his own choice in regard to preferment, no situation could have suited him better than this, for I feel convinced no anchorite ever cared less for worldly pelf than the author of the "Minstrel." I believe his utmost ambition in that respect never went beyond

the wish for mere competence. He was a poet in the truest sense of the term. He cherished the art, and the feeling by which it is animated, because he felt that this last was an elementary principle in his own existence, the cultivation and discipline of which was sanative to his own mind. It is true no one cares for the "Minstrel" now, because railroads and other pecuniary speculations are topics all-engrossing. One would almost as soon think of reading the "Faery Queene." No doubt the taste for poems must give way to the passion for pelf, and if "Young England" be studious enough to read the daily newspapers and "Punch" regularly, it is quite as much as can reasonably be expected.

But to return; we find in Beattie's poem exquisite harmony of numbers, also creative power—that is, the power which I have already mentioned of developing beauty from scenes where others could not descry aught but the drear and desolate mountain heath; above all, we find here, as in his other works, a deep and important moral purpose. I have wandered many times in the same glens of the hill of Garvock, and have watched the north sea from the same rocks of the bleak coast which he commemorates. I remember there is one stanza of the "Minstrel" which another eminent professor of morals, namely, Dugald Stewart,

never could by any chance recite without a faltering voice, and being moved almost to tears. He alone could explain what secret chords were thus touched. Others will read it with perfect equanimity.

"Oh, how can'st thou renounce the boundless store
Of charms which Nature to her votary yields,
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves and garniture of fields,
All that the genial ray of morning gilds;
And all that echoes to the song of even,
All that the mountain's fostering bosom shields,
And all the dread magnificence of Heaven,—
Oh, how can'st thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven?'"

Throughout the whole north of Scotland in these days, there was not one who could compete with Doctor Beattie, the recluse professor at Aberdeen, in variety of accomplishments; for he was an excellent classical scholar, a veritable poet, a scientific as well as practical musician, an indefatigable student, and, as a metaphysician, unsurpassed at that epoch, unless it were by his friend and colleague, Dr. Reid. I need not, however, say more of him in this place, for his character being long and widely established, I appealed to his name only in support of my assertion, that the light of poetic genius had mingled with the sunlight on our cold grey mountains. It was fitting, I thought, to introduce some evidence of this kind,

after having dwelt for so many chapters on the *rus verum et barbarum*, and on the humours, such as they were, of Bonnymune, Lords Arbuthnot, Kintore, Monboddo and Gardenstone.

Yet I will not conclude without observing that Dr. Beattie was, through life, sneered at, if not hated, by a certain minority, who wondered at his isolated habits, and admitted that his poems were vastly "pretty." They were angry, too, if not envious, on account of his pension from the privy purse, his visits to London, and private audiences of that enlightened and deeply-read monarch, George III. Numberless times have I heard pitiful gibes and innuendoes aimed against him. Because he abhorred noise and interruption, this was finical; he loved good wine after dinner, this was intemperance; he was not *generally* convivial nor accessible to all visitors, this was *hauteur* and self-conceit; he cherished a peculiar antipathy to the crowing of a cock, this was affectation or madness; he rose late, and, notwithstanding his extensive literary labours, *that* was laziness. All this, and more in like tone, I have heard reckoned up against him, with a mixture of contempt and venom. Indeed, the "Edinburgh" review of his life and correspondence, is from beginning to end, little better than a sneer against his memory. The critic seems almost to grudge every compliment

bestowed on Beattie, and even stigmatizes him for not kicking and spurning at the distinguished individuals by whom such compliments were proffered. On one occasion, it seems, he accepted a present from the foundress of the Blue-stocking Society, the wealthy Mrs. Montague, whereupon the reviewer indignantly remarks: "Sam Johnson would have starved on two pence a day rather than have abased himself in such manner!" (I quote from memory). Now, it so happens that the redoubtable Sam Johnson, though exposed to straits and difficulties, was scarcely ever tried by the ordeal of starvation, as the illustrious George Crabbe afterwards was; and respecting his vaunted independence, and disposition to spurn a proffered gift, the sentiment, after all, is more like that of a dictatorial, arrogant, egotistic vulgarian, than of a Christian or gentleman. Were the donor in humble station, or embarrassed, the case no doubt would be widely different. But the reply: "keep your goods and riches to yourself; I scorn to accept of them," is an expression vastly "John Bullish," perhaps, but surely neither kind nor courteous. "I wont refuse what is heartily proffered, and kindly intended," is a far more Christian-like answer.

Before leaving the worthies of the North, and moving *per saltum* to another era in my own life, I

must not omit to notice one other extraordinary character, perhaps more remarkable than any of those I have yet named; I mean the Rev. Alex. Geddes. Born, like Dr. Beattie, in the humblest station, the son of a peasant in Banffshire, a Catholic in a country where that faith was *proscrit*, after passing his noviciate with the best possible repute at Paris, he became a priest. (His brother John, I think, was a monk in the same Scotch convent at Würtzburg, to which I have alluded in Chapter sixth). For profound learning and indomitable industry, I believe Dr. Geddes was almost unequalled by *any* contemporary. His accomplishments were various, and he published many works; but that on which he bestowed most labour was a new translation of the Hebrew scriptures. He had set his heart on the completion of this undertaking, but strange to say, instead of being cheered and encouraged therein by his Catholic brethren in the North, he was by them opposed and repudiated. Had the work itself been objectionable, this would have been an intelligible cause of complaint, but this never was alleged against him. It was his fate to provoke hostility on other grounds. Being himself an *ultra* liberal, and like the celebrated Father O'Leary, indulging always in the utmost simplicity and freedom of speech, perhaps he had come into

collision with austere formalists, who misunderstood his manner, or who conscientiously believed that his enthusiasm in literary pursuits tended to distract his attention from laborious details of duty in the situation which he held, and they would make no allowances for any such aberration. Be this as it may, the opposition—I might in truth say persecution, to which Dr. Geddes then and afterwards became liable, would be almost incredible, had we not the life of St. Alphonso de Liguori, and divers others, showing what fierceness and bitterness an *ultra* spirit of conservatism, and the "stand-stock-still" principle may engender in a community where there ought to exist unanimity not only of doctrine, but of practice. His colleagues in the North resolved that his labours at all events, should not be carried on among them: accordingly he was debarred the exercise of his clerical functions, and writhing under this disgrace, he repaired to London, where he forthwith found Catholic friends, both among the clergy and laity, who approved of his undertakings, and were willing to support them.

Here he continued his pursuits in various departments of literature, but his abettors and supporters were few, and his opponents numerous, and as to his *magnum opus*, the translation of the Scriptures, he had not merely to sustain the labour

of the work, but all the expenses of publication; for the *majority* of the English world, both Catholic and Protestant, manifested towards it a spirit of the purest indifferentism. Literary labour may doubtless be carried on under these adverse circumstances, but it is thereby rendered doubly trying. Geddes sat down to his daily task with the consciousness that he worked for a public who did not desire his services, also with the still more bitter consciousness, that his debts accumulated faster than his labour progressed; nay, that bailiffs were in waiting to snatch the pen out of his hand, and remove him to prison, where, at that time, every narrow cell had its three or four inmates. In the latter years of his life these circumstances became almost insupportable, the more so, because Geddes was naturally very irritable and sensitive, and when he found himself injured, thought it a duty to fight in his own defence. He was, I suspect, not only an eccentric, but what is called a very imprudent man, and did not pause to reflect that by proving others to be in the wrong, he thereby made them more active and inveterate opponents. In those latter days of his painful life, he was again formally debarred the exercise of his clerical functions. Three bishops together came on the field against him, and he answered them not merely with the acute reasoning of a man

aggrieved, but too evidently with bitter emotion. To one of them he says—"But, my lord, you cannot hinder me to pray at home, and at home I *will* pray, in defiance of you and of your censure, as often as I please. The Bishop of our souls is always accessible, and through Him I can at all times have free access to the Father, who will not reject me, but for voluntary and unrepented crimes."

Dr. Geddes, however, was never left wholly without friends. Like St. Alphonso, if repudiated by one bishop, he was sanctioned and befriended by another. In his decline, the sum of nearly 1000*l.* was made up by his few, but zealous, friends, in order to free him from his embarrassments, and he then returned to his employments with all the zest and animation of youth. But thirty years of disappointments, irritation, and anxiety, had preyed on his constitution, and, regardless of pain, he had persevered in his labours till a disease became rooted, against which medical skill proved in vain. Too possibly, a waywardness of temper or temperament, an irritability of the nervous system, both caused by infirm health, may have been the real cause of that eccentricity whereby he provoked animadversion, and which, if thoroughly explained, would have been pardoned and pitied in quarters where he met only opposition and censure.

CHAPTER IX.

TRIAL OF JOSEPH GERRALD.—HIS ELOQUENCE AND ENTHUSIASM.—THE AUTHOR'S IMPRESSIONS THEREFROM.—POLITICAL PARTIES AND ENLIGHTENED PARTIZANS.—JOHN WILDE, ADVOCATE.—HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ECCENTRICITY.—RETURN TO EGOTISM, TO LANDSCAPE-GARDENING AND LIFE IN THE COUNTRY.

I HAVE written eight chapters, partly filled with praises of a country life, and partly with slight, hasty sketches of character. Suppose that now for a few moments, as the opportunity may not occur again, I should touch, *en passant*, on the politics of 1794.

During that year, there occurred an event, unimportant perhaps in the eyes of most people, but of which the record afterwards made a deep impression on my mind. Among divers prosecutions for sedition, that were got up in those days, was one against Joseph Gerrald, self-styled a "delegate of the British Convention." His trial, with the portrait, by Kaye, prefixed, makes rather a bulky octavo, which may still be found among old tracts at book stalls. The principal advocate for the

defence was my late uncle, Lord Gillies, then very young at the bar, who made a long appeal for his client, no less learned and argumentative than eloquent and affecting. He did this *con amore*, being himself at that time one of the *ultra* liberal school. But it is hardly needful to say, that all the eloquence of all the orators who ever pleaded would not have moved President Macqueen and his brethren, nor the jury, in behalf of such a prisoner. In good sooth, the judges in those days were another droll fraternity, whose intellectual grasp was not over expansive, and who were not by any means prone to be led astray from their sacred duties to the crown, by the morbid weakness of compassion.

This Joseph Gerrald, according to all testimony, was a well-educated, enthusiastic, and at first amiable man, and if memory has not deceived me (for I have not the book above-mentioned), the most singular point in his unfortunate case was, that, instead of being an insurgent for the purpose of introducing French revolutionary movements, all his efforts were avowedly and truly with a view to conserving order and tranquillity in his own country. On the "British Convention," and the reforms which it stickled for, depended, as he believed, our only chance of permanent safety. His purposes, therefore, were such as

judges and jury were bound to applaud, but instead of so doing, they regarded his bold censures of existing abuses, and his proposed reforms, as wild and wicked innovations amounting to sedition, and requiring exemplary punishment. But in all that he had written or said, I feel convinced that there was no nearer approach to sedition than the mere utterance of doctrines such as may now be read every week, in existing journals, and heard in Session time even within the walls of St. Stephen's, without exciting the slightest alarm or discomposure. His counsel accordingly failed not to represent Gerrald as a man imprudent, no doubt, from over zeal, yet both morally and politically speaking, harmless and inculpable, therefore, unjustly persecuted and traduced. "Who," said he, "is entitled to search into this man's breast? He perhaps can lay his hand on his heart, and say that he viewed the French Revolution as holding out to us a warning not to be too dilatory in obtaining a moderate reform, before the people are stirred up to those excesses which have been committed in France." Lastly, he pleaded that "Justice ceases to be justice unless it is administered in mercy," and dwelt emphatically on the truth that poor Gerrald's health had already suffered so much that the proposed punishment of exile beyond the seas, would in all probability prove a

sentence to that "bourne from whence no traveller returns."

Ere the scene closed, on the third day I believe, Gerrald pleaded his own defence, in a manner so fearless, forcible, eloquent, and affecting, that I regret not having the now rare pamphlet, to transcribe from. "Persecutions," said he, "cannot efface principles," and accordingly, he reiterated all those principles of the Convention, for his advocacy of which he had been accused, and all but condemned, defending himself on every point as he advanced. He was fervently sincere, this man! One of the *dicta* specially recorded against him, I remember, was as follows:—

"If Government were to instruct the poor instead of hanging up their bodies on gibbets, the voice of the people would be the voice of God (*vox populi vox Dei*);" a somewhat rash and not over logical proposition, perhaps, but surely not such as would now-a-days even assist to send a poor, dying man to New South Wales. Poor outcasts could be gibbeted then for stealing rations of the coarsest food, and the utterance of moral sentiments, even mere truisms, could be interpreted into sedition. In *modo operandi*, in demonstrations of taste our legislature has undergone some changes no doubt, but radically, I need scarcely add, that its character continues the same. We

have the same exemplary disgust for close reasoning, the same antipathy to immutable principles, the same *penchant* for specious motives of expediency and utilitarianism. The "try back," and anti-reformist parties are not extinct. Already we seem disposed to re-establish in full force the so-called law of imprisonment for debt; and the jails which were pulled down, must be rebuilt. This alone is a quite sufficient source of demoralization, destitution, and crime in the land. Accordingly, one has no need to despond of living to see the system of capital punishment restored, and the hangman as actively employed as the bailiff is at present. If our thousands of attorneys were as much interested in the latter as they now are in the former, its revival would be craved pertinaciously.

Gerrald's counsel battled for him to the very last, disputing even the substance of the verdict, the jury not having declared therein that they had considered "all the evidence," as they were bound to do. But his efforts were in vain; the sentence was transportation for fourteen years! However, the poor man escaped from the power both of judges and jury. He died on ship-board, and I believe that event took place before the transport vessel had cleared the British coast.

Gerrald's real character, however, was not so well-known at Edinburgh as in England, where he

had been acquainted with Parr and Porson, and other eminent persons, by some of whom, it is said, he was visited in Newgate, during the interval before his final embarkation;—they proffered such aid as his situation admitted, but he had become abandoned and reckless, indulging more and more in habits of intemperance, which cut off every remaining hope of his restoration to health.

Naturally enough, I placed implicit confidence in all that my near relative had said in favour of this unfortunate man, consequently did not hesitate to regard him as a martyr, and to detest the murderous authorities by whom the sentence had been pronounced. This was not perfectly wise or strictly logical on my part; but, as above said, it was very natural; and, as an autobiographer, I could not leave out this occurrence, because the pamphlet about Joseph Gerrald and another book which I first perused in my tenth or twelfth year, namely, the "Memoirs of Baron Trenck," made an impression in boyhood which has lasted with me through life. It was no paltry pamphlet about Trenck; it was the complete edition in four octavo volumes, translated, I believe, by Holcrofft. I recked not the minute details of his early life, of court intrigues and such like; it was on the prison scenes and his efforts at escape that my attention was fixed. I beg the reader's pardon for this

morsel of mere egotism. The effects which such reading had on my after life will appear in due time and place.

But I intended to write a few lines about the politics or political parties of 1794. Oh, truly, we were a busy nation then—busy even in the north of Scotland, with our own notions of affairs,—busy too with our military preparations, among which the organisation of a corps of Brechin volunteers (commanded by one of my nearest relatives) was considered very memorable. But, it must be confessed, our ultra-reform party, the representatives of the new light derived from Paris, did not acquit themselves in a manner very edifying or consolatory. Among us, as far as I can recollect, the majority of this party were considered "knowing hands;" people rather wicked, perhaps, but excessively clever; and who were quite agreed among themselves on certain points: as for example,—firstly, whatever was, was wrong; secondly, that crowned heads ought all to be deposed; thirdly, that so-styled political constitutions were made to be broken; fourthly, and above all, that religious faith was a pitiful delusion.

Now these were, as they still are, very pleasant and entertaining texts for clever people, especially that class who hold no official situations, who have nothing particular to do, have little or nothing to

lose, and would much like to clutch the reins of power, and turn everything their own way. They are vastly pleasant tenets too for such country gentlemen as can be diverted by the utterance theoretically of *dicta*, the practical realisation of which might affect their own ruin, because they have in the back-ground the comfortable lurking notion that the said utterance will never lead to any active *carrying-out*, and that their own position in the world will remain snugly enough, as it was.

Among our excessively clever people, the fourth of the above-mentioned tenets was always especially dwelt upon; though why scoffing at crowned heads and so-called political order should involve, by way of corollary, an avowed contempt for religious faith, I cannot exactly say. However, it had long since been agreed in our Protestant land, that there was no authority in matters of religion, except the Scriptures; and that every one might freely appeal to this authority and interpret its *dicta* according to his own judgment. There needed no more but a very natural carrying out of this principle in order to rouse the pertinent question: "whence then are we to deduce the authority of the said Scriptures?" but, as the established principle above quoted rendered any attempt for this purpose impossible, the result was obvious. "You tell us that there is no authority but what

is contained in this book, yet you expect either that we are to receive it on *your* guarantee as a divine book, or to admit that the book carries in itself its own deduction, both of which propositions, under the circumstances, are absurd."

Having this undeniable vantage-ground, our *ultra* bold and clever people gained opportunities enough of showing their own superiority of intellect, when they could turn into fearless ridicule doctrines and precepts which their neighbours at all events *professed* to hold in profound veneration. In those days, as I have already hinted, the works of Voltaire among French authors, and Tom Paine among the English, were reckoned class-books for infidel argumentators. The sneers, irony, and sarcasm of the one, and the complicated sophistries of the other, were reckoned most dangerous;—indeed *were* dangerous reading; from which the inference is almost unavoidable, that the previous education of the readers had not been very exemplary. They were, indeed, but poorly fortified by sound knowledge or logical discipline, if their minds could be swayed and their previous creed upset by such productions. Many were so swayed, however, and the representatives of this party have increased and multiplied up to recent times, when weekly journals have been devoted to their cause.

Amongst a considerable *clique*, or class, there

certainly prevailed a vehement *penchant* for scoffing at all established order whatsoever; and as this was a heterogeneous *clique*, I think it may be analyzed and divided as follows: first, crazy but well-meaning enthusiasts; secondly, crafty rogues; thirdly, idle, babbling, noisy, punch-drinking fools, who would figure as "friends of the people," without any explicable plan or principle whatsoever. And yet, under the generic name of Whigs or Liberals, were to be reckoned a fourth class, few in number, and of widely different *calibre*; men who with a love of order, more steadfast because more rational than could animate any bigoted Tory; men who with a due respect for aristocracy and monarchical power, did yet consider it their duty to watch with a jealous eye the conduct of those who held high stations; men who respected the possessors of rank and fortune only in so far as they exercised power not for their own individual benefit and luxurious caprices, but for the protection and well-being of all; men who sincerely venerated the constitution and constitutional law of England, and who, finding in the pure principles of Magna Charta a perpetual guide, applicable alike in all ages, did hold in abhorrence all measures, whether public or private, which savoured of tyranny and oppression; men who, therefore, deprecated and detested all needless and one-sided

rigours of the law; and whilst they cordially agreed that military force and discipline should be kept up, nay that Englishmen should be "armed to the teeth" in defence of their country, did yet conscientiously deprecate that war which we had then commenced against France, and which they regarded as premature and uncalled for.

True it is that among this really respectable class, there might also be found individuals who, without being wild enthusiasts or infidels, had yet a certain leaning, a negative leaning if I may so speak, to the cause of the French Republic, men who felt convinced that the French people had not been roused to such atrocious excesses without long provocation, nor without hideous abuse of power, or negligence of duty, on the part of the crown and aristocracy. Clear enough it was, that the *idéal* of a good and beneficial monarchy had failed in its efficacy and been at last repudiated in France. It was then a matter of curious speculation to watch how far the *idéal* of a happy republic might or might not work for the benefit of the people. On these grounds, among others, the rationally liberal party in England did sincerely deprecate the war, against which some strongly argumentative pamphlets were written, the best among them being those by Lord Erskine and Sir Brooke Boothby, both in answer to Burke.

Among our most notable enthusiasts in those days, must be reckoned John Wilde, advocate, lecturer on "Roman Law," and author of a ponderous 8vo. volume entitled an "Address to the Friends of the People." If this obsolete volume came to light now, it seems to me that I could draw good things from it; but in early years I pored over it in vain; it was an eloquent and learned, but for me an unedifying and unprofitable book.

By all accounts, this John Wilde was, in American phrase, "one of our most remarkable men." He had the rare accomplishment of being an admirably good classical scholar, a man qualified almost to engage (had they been contemporaries) in a Latin or Greek colloquy with Father Prout, which is saying a great deal. I believe, however, that scarcely any one in our Parliament House circles really liked John Wilde. On some points he had shot too far a-head of the fraternity to which he seemed to belong, or, rather, he was of no fraternity but *sui generis*. He had morbid, fitful energy, and in all his notions was earnestly and fervently sincere. Such characters must of course always be solitary. Your earnest and sincere man may be surrounded visibly by crowds, nay, thousands may be subjected to his command, yet he himself remains utterly aloof and alone.

I have heard often of John Wilde from my late uncle, Lord Gillies. He worked industriously, after a certain fashion, that is, according to his own fancy, yet could not be relied on as a professional man, for he obstinately postponed all tasks bearing on the immediate affairs of the world. But if at last an excessive pressure did come, he could, in one night, get through work which would have been enough for three days' labour to any ordinary man. This much being said of his habits and temper, the reader need not wonder to hear that the enthusiastic and learned John Wilde became at last utterly insane; but his condition needed not restraint; it was harmless to every one but himself. He had been always lonely, strange, and secluded; he was more so now, but that was all. The last *notandum* I heard of him amounted only to this, that, though not quite unconscious of his own unhappy state, he would occasionally come to the Parliament House demanding his gown, which of course could not be refused to him, and on his appearance in the crowded hall he alarmed everybody by his frenzied looks and demeanour. I regret not knowing more about John Wilde, who, I fancy, deserved a better record.

That the French Revolution did alarm all authorities and encourage the malcontents in all

countries is very sure. For example, excitement had gone so far, even in the quiet town of Edinburgh, that now and then a revolutionary mob paraded the streets with a banner, that is to say, a pole with a pennant of some sort and a red night-cap at the top. This kind of demonstration proved of good service to a young advocate of those days, Mr. Claude Irving Boswell, afterwards Lord Balmuto, who happened, in crossing the North Bridge to encounter one of these delightful processions. More by way of frolic than with any notion of proving his loyalty, he elbowed his way into the middle of the mob, seized the precious banner, and directly pitched it over the bridge. The cry of the mob was to pitch him over after it; but his bodily strength and weight were such that they might as well have tried the experiment on a bull or a rhinoceros! Right and left he upset his assailants, and without further injury than that of a torn coat, strode sturdily away. This loyal deed was duly reported in high places, and, at an early age, Mr. Claude Irving Boswell was raised to the dignity of the Bench.

If I have dwelt too long on vague and shadowy reminiscences connected with the year 1794, I shall negatively make amends by passing over the next five years of boyhood with little or no comment. During those years, however, was

fixed that preference for literary labour and research which, *malgré* all opposition, and very infirm health, has continued with me through life, which, moreover, lingers on at this hour, when deprived both of books and of leisure, I have no other materials to work upon but these recollections. I believe it was obvious enough, to at least one of my friends, that neither by physical constitution, temperament, or tone of mind, should I ever be fitted for any of the money-getting professions. But as consolation for this, the capacity to gain and the disposition to hoard, desirable as were such characteristics, would not, in my case, be necessary.—It was only needful to rest contented with existing income, and to live within it.

My father had passed sixteen years in the East Indies, during the time of Earl Cornwallis and of Warren Hastings; during those times when almost every one who retained tolerable health and possessed even moderate talents did, almost as a matter of course, and without any extraordinary exertion, acquire competent and sometimes overgrown fortunes. He had happened to gain the special friendship, confidence, and patronage of Colonel Thomas Deane Pearse, then second in command, one of the bravest and most distinguished officers of the British army. My father's

allowances were ample; he held at last a lucrative situation, and, notwithstanding habits of profusion and generosity, had remitted considerable sums to his relations in Scotland, part of which was afterwards invested in purchases of land in the counties of Ayr, Forfar, and Kincardine.

On the low prices of land in those days I have often reflected with wonder. Those men who retired from foreign service with competent fortunes, had they been gifted with sufficient foresight, would no doubt have preferred this to all other modes of investment. One property, for which, in 1787, my father paid only 9,000*l.*, was, after the lapse of twenty years, valued (correctly) at 42,000*l.*! About the same period (1787) a small estate in the same district was eagerly offered to another of my relations for 5,000*l.*, but he was an *ultra*-wise and prudent man, and thought it too dear. This identical property, adorned by wood, and improved by good farming, was sold, in 1812, for 28,000*l.*

"*O rus, quando te aspiciam?*" I have cherished this sentiment through life, and accidental circumstances in boyhood assisted to implant it thus firmly. It happened that on one of the properties above-mentioned, Messrs. White and Son, of Woodlands, near Durham, rented a few acres of nursery-ground for forest-trees. An acquaintance

naturally arose betwixt landlord and tenant. Mr. White, junior, declared that he had been attracted to the scene by its natural beauty and capability, and by the thoughts of how he would treat such an estate if he were fortunate enough to be its owner. Accordingly, he was requested to make a plan for its improvement, which he did on principles very easily intelligible. He would have all the waste and moor-land well drained and planted. The better ground in the lowlands was to be laid out like an English park, and a new house, on a moderate scale (planned by Mr. Adam), to be built on a convenient and beautiful eminence near the junction of two rivers.

Every competent judge was delighted with Mr. White's plan, his employer especially; but then came opposition and objection on the part of extremely prudent people, caring not a rush about the picturesque, who argued that it would be far better and wiser to patch up and enlarge a very old house, than to build a new one on a site however beautiful; also, that Mr. White's plans were too *dashing* (a *pet* word then), for he had marked to be thrown into wood very many acres which, if properly cultivated, would yield excellent crops of grain.

So, between these conflicting advisers, a compromising middle course was adopted, by which

Mr. White's views were frustrated. The old house was repaired and enlarged at considerable expense, under the care of an ultra-stupid architect. Mr. White's plans were only so far carried out, that a great deal of wood was planted, principally in broad masses, which in the course of only five or six years became both sheltering and beautiful.

My father took intense interest in these proceedings; he looked on the trees which he had planted with a kind of brotherly affection. Instead of returning to the East Indies to resume his official station, he thus gradually became attached to his landed property, thinking more of its beauty than of any farming speculations, and this was an attachment which I afterwards cherished and have scarcely lost to the present hour. I became Mr. White's constant attendant in his professional rambles over the grounds, assisted him in the operation of "marking out," and by degrees, his visits being continued up to the year 1807, learned the principles of his art.

In deep seclusion then, with no companions but books, dogs, and trees, were my days of early boyhood passed. Independently of ill-health, that any young person thus trained should turn out an oddity, and prove altogether unfitted for what are termed the "duties of active life and ways of

the world," if not to be inferred as a *sequitur*, was a very natural consequence. The theorems which I have suggested, in former chapters, respecting the possibility of complete education in rural retirement were then, as they still are, merely theorems.

CHAPTER X.

PLEA FOR EGOTISM AND FOR TRIFLING MEMORANDA.—TRENCK'S MEMOIRS. — THE SCHOOL-ROOM. — COUNT RUMFORD. — HINTS ON EDUCATION. — FIVE YEARS ALLOWED FOR WORK THAT MIGHT BE ACCOMPLISHED IN TWO.

AUTOBIOGRAPHERS, as I have said, must be egotists. This indeed is a self-evident proposition; moreover no autobiography, as such, can be complete without a share of "personal talk," trifles, and "twaddle." A house cannot be built exclusively of marble and *or moulu;* it requires no less the help of straw, mud, and mortar, though the spectator recks not of them; and a character is not cemented without important influences from very trifling causes.

Books are a most natural resource in solitude for the sake of mere pastime. It is, however, no very arrogant boast, if I repeat that from earliest years, I cherished a propensity for literary labour. Betwixt the years 1796 and 1800, I had covered loads of paper with useless manuscript, and when not employed in scribbling, was always poring

over books without aim or method. I shall allude here, for the second time, to one of those, namely, "The Memoirs of Baron Trenck." Not all the speeches of C. J. Fox, much as I admired them in after years, nor other demonstrations of the liberal party, made such indelible impressions on my mind as this one old book. I conceived from it not only a hatred of oppression and tyranny, but a lurking suspicion of all crowned heads without exception, including confidential office-bearers under them. As to the *vexata questio*, whether all those evils which have often enough arisen under a monarchy were certainly to be conquered and banished for ever by means of a republic, I ventured not on it. Among the various abuses of arbitrary power, however, I cherished the most especial horror at the deprivation of personal liberty, which I regarded as in its nature a punishment more cruel and iniquitous than even the deprivation of life. On this point, my feelings at the present hour are nearly the same as they were thirty-nine years ago.

However, as prolonged personal talk about the author's childhood would be the *ne plus ultra* of insipidity, I shall make a leap over those years of infancy, and begin a new series of recollections from the arrival of my kind preceptor, the late Dr. Glennie, in 1800.

This kind friend was the son of a presbyterian clergyman, in Aberdeenshire, and had from his youth wished to follow the same calling. But people are long-lived and tough in the cold north of Scotland; there seemed little chance of any one dying to make room for him, and he had accepted a humble curacy at the town of Dorpt, in Holland. Remaining some years there, he came home on leave of absence to visit his relations, and instead of returning to Dorpt, had settled down into the situation of a recluse student in Lord Gardenstone's village of Laurencekirk, to which he was attracted, because when resident there, he had an opportunity of going every Sunday to officiate for an established clergyman, who had become lunatic at his manse on the dreary bleak hill of Garvock.

Perfect contentment with the humblest lot; the utter absence of all ambition, except to have a kirk of his own—never mind how small might be the stipend,—these were prevailing traits in Dr. Glennie's character, for whose memory I cherish the sincerest respect. At his first visit, my father, more in jest than earnest, inquired whether he thought a so-called "school-room" adjoining the house would make a tolerable dwelling-place, to which, without a moment's hesitation, he answered in the affirmative, at the same time pointing to

the solitary window, which was traceried by the branches of a cherry-tree, trained across it.

"It is very lightsome," he said; "that window, with its prospect into the garden, makes one's heart blythe to look at it; and there's an excellent grate in the fire-place, against the time when we need winter fires."

No farther comments took place; but next day a retired ship-carpenter, who officiated as upholsterer, set to work in the school-room, "boarded" the floor, which before was a stone pavement, placed a bed in a recess, fitted up wardrobe, bookshelves, &c., and next time when the truly amiable pastor saw the apartment, he became equally contented therewith as if he had been invited to a suite of rooms in a royal palace. This contentment did not seem to diminish during three or four years that he resided there, although the chimney had the detestable vice that during winter storms it smoked immoderately. Divers plans for curing this defect were talked of, but, strange to say, none succeeded. In fact, the business of an *artiste fumiste*, or smoke doctor, was not much better understood in those days than that of lucifer-match making; and as for the celebrated Count Rumford, his improvements on chimneys were considered much too philosophical, and could not be "carried out" by ordinary hands. Those who

could have the count's own advice and personal superintendence, might perhaps succeed in exorcising the smoke demon, but without this, attempts at imitation often proved failures. At Edinburgh, indeed, very strong measures were resorted to in the shape of machines of white iron, called, "old wives," which revolving furiously on the chimney-pots with every gust of wind, were expected to prevent the said wind from ever descending into the chimney. But in the provinces, this elaborate contrivance was not yet ventured on.

My wise reader, if he has held on thus far, will perhaps condemn the last paragraph, as being unpardonably silly. I think of it otherwise. The affair of the refractory chimney tends to bring out an illustration of character. I was for fighting the smoke demon with Rumford's aid, and by all other possible means; my preceptor, on the contrary, voted for baffling him by indifference and contempt. "The smoke never troubles us," said he, "except when the wind is in the south. If the fire burns clear, it can scarcely trouble us at all, and besides we can always get the better of it by opening the window." With such a man, to try at reform doctrines, at republican doctrines, or even bold experiment, or innovation of any kind, was of course out of the question. His watchwords, seemingly, were patience and contentment.

I had intended a serious chapter on the state of education, and our methods of study in those days, but am allowed room for only a few hasty remarks. By some queer chance, or convention, not altogether in keeping with other favourite notions, it was thought indispensably requisite, that every youth should, as the phrase runs, learn Latin and Greek. Whether after a five years' course for this purpose, the students had really learned those languages, or under the existing system could have acquired philosophically and correctly the principles of any language, were questions never curiously dived into. Indeed, such inquiries, if made, would have been considered pragmatical and *fashous*. There had been doubts even, whether any general principles existed, upon which such pursuits could be made to hinge, Monboddo being inflexibly of opinion that "language was not natural to man!" In like manner, I suppose, we regarded logic not as a science but an art, and were of opinion with the exemplary Mr. Locke, that Aristotle had not discovered but "*invented*" the syllogism. If any one had insisted on principles metaphysical and universal, as the indispensable basis for the linguist's progress, and contended that these being inherent in every mind, must be developed and understood from the outset,—moreover that two years' study in this manner would effect more than

five in any other, doubtless he would have been reckoned a mystical dreamer or wild innovator. The result however was, that all students, whether diligent or idle, were mechanically drilled into being able to parse and translate certain portions of selected authors, of Cæsar, Sallust, and Tacitus, Virgil, and Horace, in Latin,—whilst in Greek, from the "Analekta Minora," they might be led on to Xenophon and Homer. But alas, the seeming acquirements thus effected, were too often like a laborious exhibition of building without adequate foundation. An edifice might thus be raised, but in after years it naturally fell to pieces.

Be it remembered, I speak of the ordinary system, as adopted in the far north; whether matters were differently managed at Edinburgh, Glasgow, or St. Andrews, I presume not to say. It was not much to be feared, that our hopeful student would meet with any one inclined to cross-question him too severely on critical points, seeing that such scholars as Monboddo, Dr. Geddes, Dr. Beattie, and John Wilde (not forgetting Professors Dalzel and Hill), were excessively rare; and, admitting that such remarkable individuals had contrived to establish their own acquisitions on the soundest principles, yet their example did by no means spread in practice. Nay, if truth must be told, our then prevalent mode of education

seemed considerably analogous to our mode of repairing the high roads. The state of the latter was such as to discourage from travelling every one who could possibly sit at his own fireside; our educational practice, regulated by fashion, was such as very effectually to disgust the student, if not to render sound learning almost impossible.

I have proposed a book of rapid memoranda from a long life, and must not pause here to weave a long chapter on education far less on metaphysics. My respected friend Dr. Glennie was himself an excellent classical scholar, and most sincerely fond of books; but as I have already indicated, he was not revolutionary in his notions, nor even ambitious. As a teacher, consequently, he followed the usual method, being of opinion perhaps that if the fabric raised had not a very philosophical or firm foundation, still the mere submission to prescribed tasks must be considered a beneficial exercise, and that a student naturally gifted with talents for such pursuits, would willingly progress, and lay a sufficient foundation for himself afterwards.

CHAPTER XI.

OLD BOOKS ON THE BLACK ART, ALSO ON GHOSTS, DEMONS, AND WITCHES. — PER CONTRA, BOOKS OF DIVINITY AND CHURCH CONTROVERSY. — DRAKE'S "LITERARY HOURS." — THE AUTHOR'S CHARACTER AND LEADING PURPOSE IN LIFE FIXED. — EARLY ATTEMPTS AT SO-CALLED POETRY.— RECOLLECTIONS OF H. W. TYTLER, M.D.—AMUSEMENTS OF WINTER.

It happened in 1801, that this worthy friend returning from a Christmas visit to his relations in Aberdeen, brought with him an extensive catalogue of old and rare books then on sale in that northern metropolis. My father studied this list and selected many good authors. I petitioned humbly that I might be allowed to give an order also, after my own separate choice and fancy, and the request being granted, set to work eagerly yet cautiously. My friends were heartily amused with the result, which certainly was curious. The bookseller sent the contents of my order in a separate box. I cannot express nor forget the delight with which in a wild wintry day I hailed its arrival. It comprised more than a hundred little antique volumes, most of them in Latin, but a very few in old Eng-

lish and French, all (with one solitary exception) treating on magic either natural or supernatural, on witches, ghosts, *diablerie*, in short all the diversities of what used to be called "occult science." At this moment I remember vividly the exterior aspects of these volumes, though I can scarcely recall even their names. There was Baptista Porta's little square pocket-book of four hundred pages, *De Magia Naturali*, the same author's ingenious octavo *De Physiognomia*, (a queer forerunner of Lavater's magnificent quartos;) we had a complete set of Cornelius Agrippa's works all in Latin, and minor publications, now rare, of Athanasius Kircher. But what I most valued were some elaborately bound volumes by authors of note surely in their own day, but whose names could not now be found in any biographical dictionary. There was especially a duodecimo in old French, bound in Morocco, richly gilded, treating of the deepest magical mysteries, which I earnestly desired to read, but could not. Of all such acquisitions the only one that remained to me in after years was the "Opusculum Raimundinum," or "*Ars Brevis*" of Lully, also bound in morocco, and now extremely scarce. From this moment onwards, I believe there was not a young student in all the world more anxious than I was to gain a thorough command over foreign languages, not from any

wish to understand the so-called classics, who, being known less or more to every one, did for that very reason interest me the less, but for the sake of being able to interpret these cabalistic volumes. For this purpose I would not have shied any degree of labour, because I regarded them as opening a kind of new world, or in better terms, of re-opening a long-neglected path, which, however thorny and obscure, might yet possibly lead to discoveries of no little importance. In this particular object of my ambition, however, I was not encouraged nor seconded.

With sorrow I discovered that the advantage, such as it was, of having been drilled to translate certain portions of Livy, Sallust, and Tacitus, did by no means enable me to expound the mysterious chapters of Baptista Porta, Cornelius Agrippa, Athanasius Kircher, Lavaterus "*De Spectris et Lemuribus*," and many others whose names I have now forgotten. Instead of being the lazy pupil, I became the *exigeant* task-master of my indulgent tutor. When our daily themes were written and corrected, and a due portion of classical reading gone through, I begged of Dr. Glennie to translate for me certain portions of the aforesaid magical authors, which I diligently committed to writing from his dictation. He good-naturedly did this to some extent, but obviously winced under the task

to such degree, that at last, though not without inward murmurings and regret, I felt myself obliged to spare him such inflictions.

He set little or no store by ghosts or demons, had not the slightest desire to know by what special incantations the devil might visibly be raised, and so perfectly indifferent did he seem to the attraction of riches, that the treatises on alchemy, of which we possessed several, were in his estimation insipid, and the bungling attempts at physical magic of the conceited Baptista Porta were, *selon lui*, quite puerile and ridiculous. On the contrary, that such a collection of authorities on the various branches of "occult science" had some value and might be turned to good account, I feel very sure, and there were volumes in our possession which might have been acceptable to Sir David Brewster, when engaged in compiling his popular treatise on this entertaining study.

No event, we are told by moralists, is unimportant. Moreover, every day is the epitome of a life, and every minute has its value. I have said that my collection of books from Aberdeen all treated of magic and devildom except one, and this was a handsome but very small thick volume in Latin, silver-clasped, dated 1632, and having for its running title "Meditationes;" by whom written I have no recollection. The title-page happened

to exhibit a good copper-plate engraving of a solitary, with books around him kneeling before a crucifix. On this book one of my friends remarked to Dr. Glennie, that no doubt it ought to be burnt, as it looked so decidedly papistical. The remark was made quite in jest, but my good preceptor replied in solemn earnest, that he "felt sure the book would not do us any harm, and that it would be a great pity to injure the pretty little volume with its silver clasps and engraved title."

I was only thirteen years old, it is true, but had read much, and could well enough understand why books which treated on all branches of the black art, especially spells for raising the devil, should be condemned; but for my life I could not imagine why the book now in question should have been burnt, nor did I comprehend exactly or at all the drift of the term papistical. It was the only volume in my collection upon which any decided remark had been made, for seemingly the rest were only regarded to be laughed at. The consequence of this hasty expression was that I attached a value to the object, which otherwise it never would have possessed in my estimation. It was among books what my unfortunate friend, Baron Trenck, had been among men, namely, a sort of proscribed book, only rescued by the special clemency of my tutor—a work to be branded or burnt as papistical,

whilst treatises on sorcery and the black art merely deserved being laughed at.

Among the thousand and one questions about occult science, wherewith I wearied Dr. Glennie, occurred also the very different query, *why* should a papistical book be burnt? But his answers were extremely short, and to my mind not quite satisfactory. I had a leaning already in favour of proscribed men and proscribed books, so this little volume, with its silver clasps and ascetic doctrines (for such they were), became a favourite, connecting itself in after years with the inquiry, why were Catholics vilified and persecuted, or in better words, why was the Catholic faith railed at and traduced?

Such was the impression which this minor incident left upon my mind, that having petitioned in 1802 to be allowed to order another parcel of books, my selection at that time consisted entirely of theological quartos and folios. In them, I met with such overstrained censures of the Catholic church and such ample expositions of the term papistical, that even at that early age, I formed the wish to study *per contra* somewhat on the other side of the question. But my intentions in that respect were not carried out till many years afterwards.

Among these theological treasures, I recollect

there was a reverend folio, entitled the "Lyfe and Actes of M. Jōn Knox, the Reformer;" but with wondrous wit and excessive drollery, some former possessor had applied his pen, and moulded the capital R into D, making the word "Deformer." Though for a different purpose, it was an expedient somewhat like that of a certain Laird of Grant, who, as Mr. Joseph Miller informs us, finding in his large family Bible the passage, "and there were Giants in those days," did nicely change the letter *i* into *r*, in order that he and his friends might have the pleasure of reading "and there were *Grants* in those days." But in regard to the folio above-mentioned, having inquired what the motive could be of substituting D for R, I was reminded that John Knox, in his zeal to overthrow the formidable Catholic faith, did also overthrow, destroy, or mutilate divers of our finest old monasteries and cathedrals. Now, a love and reverence of old buildings, whether castles, churches, or monasteries, was a principle of mine from mere childhood, and remains up to the present hour, and as the History of the Reformation was not included in my school reading, I was left without guidance or advice to draw what conclusions I thought proper, about the sayings and doings of John Knox, the "Deformer," and without any better premises to infer from than his

destructive propensities, I henceforth detested the man and his memory.

This was not like the conclusion of a good reasoner, but Dr. Macrie's elaborate memoirs of Knox were not even dreamed of then, and in a country where logic was only sneered at, or cultivated as a matter of curiosity, close reasoning could not be expected from the young. Farther, and setting aside his destructiveness, I conceived that if such a man as John Knox happened to fall in my way as the apostle of a new religious system, I would avoid him most resolutely. In these notions, I was afterwards somewhat fortified, though very unwittingly on his part, by the example of my kind tutor. There was another great apostle of the so-called Reformation, another veritable John Pure, namely, John Calvin. He did abominate and hate (so far as a truly good and kind man could be said to hate) the very name of Calvin and his "elegant" friend and *confrère* Theodore Beza.

I shall pass over these years too quickly in my own estimation, though not so in that of my reader, to whom, of course, such annals must appear more stupid than even those relating to Bonnymune. I might fill a volume with retrospections from this period, illustrating the character, so distinguished for unaffected piety, sound

learning, and unconquerable patience of my worthy preceptor. I might recall some of the many scenes which we visited together, and the hours which he sacrificed in promoting my own pursuits of chemistry, pyrotechnics, and music. But my time is limited, and I must shortly wind up this epoch. As I had met with little or no encouragement in magical researches, the transition *per saltum*, from the obsolete mysteries of Baptista Porta and black art of Cornelius Agrippa to ponderous tomes of obsolete "divinity" was very easy. I had before filled volumes of paper books with extracts respecting the occult sciences. In 1802, I earnestly devoted my attention to sermon-writing, folding my large paper into small quarto, as I saw my preceptor do, and endeavouring to fill up the requisite number of pages with sound doctrine, my leading principles being asceticism and abandonment of the world, which, according to my favourite authorities of that date, was peopled exclusively by rogues and fools. This *penchant* continued about as long as that for *diablerie* and alchemy, which was the more remarkable, as it did not prove so entertaining, and I could not in this pursuit have any confidant. The notion of avowing to my tutor, or to any one else, that I had presumed to write a sermon involved a degree of effrontery, as well as *franchise*, which,

being under no obligation to make confessions, I could not entertain for a moment. In my zealous studies of the black art, I had been repulsed and discouraged; *here* there was no hope even to sanction a trial, for that I should only be laughed at was very certain. Yet I persisted in my task over these sermons, writing, by degrees, about a score of them. In one respect the employment flattered me, because it appeared something unusual and new. I would labour assiduously and willingly in any path except a beaten one.

This theological *penchant* was in 1803 superseded by quite another. All of a sudden I turned what was called poetical. I became poet after a fashion, and this revolution was effected by a book which my instructor kindly gave me to read from his own stores, a bright new book, fresh from the press in those days, on which I still reflect with pleasure, namely Drake's "Literary Hours." It became my favourite companion for years afterwards. I may indeed take this occasion to remark that, like Trenck's memoirs, it produced an impression indelible for the rest of my life. The author, it is true, exhibits no great originality nor strength of mind, but in every chapter, be it critical or imaginative, he sets to work, and perseveres, cheerfully, sincerely, and *lovingly*. I believe every author of whom this can be said,

will gain favour with an attentive reader. It was this work, more than all others, which at that early age fixed my affections on literary pursuits, also on quiet and retirement as being thereto indispensable. There is one trifling scrap of blank verse, which the Doctor takes as the motto for a chapter, as follows:—

> "A little tranquil home
> Is all I ask on earth; and add to this
> My book and friend, and it is happiness."

There is no great force nor melody in these lines certainly, and yet they dwell perpetually on my mind. For the last twenty-five years the sentiment which they express has been uppermost there. It has been cherished to an intense, and, if I may be allowed the expression, an *impassioned* degree. Consequently, I have during those years been like an unfortunate mariner, struggling to maintain a direct course, and anxiously looking forward to a quiet harbour, yet again and again assailed by pirates, and driven astray by recurring storms, till at length strength and stores are exhausted, no friendly flag heaves in sight, and he "hopes against Hope," who almost refuses to remain with him any longer! In plainer terms, I have, during that long period, constantly struggled against the waves of chance, in order to reach and secure the aforesaid "tranquil home," to

which I might cleave like the poor snail to his shell. But enough of this for the present. The fates and fortunes of my hitherto unsuccessful voyage will be sufficiently developed in future chapters.

Dr. Drake was a minute and pains-taking critic. In 1803, it seemed to me, however, that I could contrive a more accurate translation of King Cassimir Sobieski's "Ode to his Lyre" than the doctor's friend, Mr. Heald, had produced, and on trying the experiment, made such tolerable rhymes in a dancing kind of measure, that Dr. Glennie was both surprised and flattered. The next wonderful effort of my powers was to *remanier* Horace's well-known ode about winter, which I commenced in very familiar colloquial style.

> "You see that now Soracte's height
> Is with the wintry snows grown white,"

and so forth. Meeting also with approbation for this remarkable performance, I next winter translated into heroic rhymes, Virgil's first eclogue and the entire first book of the Æneid. These made a goodly MS. in folio, which was considered something portentous. "Alexander Pope himself had not written so many rhymes at so early an age!" With all this, it is not to be wondered at, if I became extremely conceited, whilst on the

questions what poetry is or ought to be, or what course of study and self-discipline is needed for cultivating poetical powers, supposing such did really exist, I remained of course perfectly ignorant. Pope's juvenile correspondence was recommended as a guide, but it was not within the limits of possibility, that I could profit much by the study of such affectation and twaddle.

Among relations or family connexions (indeed among acquaintances generally), I could at that time name only one who ever practised verse-making. This was Dr. Henry William Tytler, cousin of the late Lord Woodhouselee, and author of many translations from Greek and Latin authors into English rhyme, achievements for which I looked on him with the utmost respect; a sentiment which I only cherished the more, because the works of this worthy man found but few admirers, and because he by no means moved on a beaten track, on the contrary, occupied himself with the revival of authors whose very names had become obsolete in our literary world, and whose works no teacher ever thought of recommending to a pupil. This was an entirely novel mode of proceeding, and as such, of course, gained my warm approval, and humble admiration.

Dr. Tytler was a physician, who for several years had extensive practice in Forfar and Kin-

cardineshires; but, unluckily for his worldly fortune, he once wrote a very meritorious elegy on the death of a friend's wife, which was admired and published in magazines of the day. This led to various other productions, and in a fatal hour, he resolved to translate St. Marthe's long Latin poem entitled, "Pædotrophia," and to accompany it with learned professional notes. This was a laborious undertaking, but Dr. Tytler had great perseverance; having begun, he would not flinch: and, in order to have his hours of uninterrupted study, he took a country-house (which he compared to Twickenham), for the sake of entire quiet, and in very accurate proportion as his poem advanced did his professional employments decline.

No matter. Dr. Tytler had by this time become convinced, that literature, poetry in particular, was, and ever had been, his proper vocation. Visions of distinction, fame, even fortune, from this source dawned on him. Nay, money could surely be had to some extent. Pope's Homer had been published by subscription, and dedicated to a noble Lord, and so it was arranged that the "Pædotrophia" should be published by subscription, and introduced by a long, poetical dedication to a very noble and learned lord, the Earl of Buchan. And all this was done; but, alas! the profits of the subscription were not very,

very brilliant, and the noble earl was not a patron from whose purse any *siller* crowns could be extracted. Crowns made of laurel and holly, he would give readily enough, as will afterwards be seen.

Moreover, Dr. Tytler translated the entire works of Callimachus from the Greek, and the said Callimachus was offered to the thankless world, in the shape of a large quarto, with a commendatory preface by the aforesaid Earl of Buchan; for at that time, Dr. Tytler's poetical enthusiasm had carried him so far, and his nerves had been so shattered by constant application, that his health broke down, his mind was affected, and for a year or more he remained in a state of utter seclusion. It may be noticed parenthetically, that by an odd coincidence the works of this most interesting and useful author were, about the same epoch, translated into Italian, and published at Naples, in the shape of a magnificent folio! When Callimachus scratched his tablets or blotted his papyrus, I fancy he little dreamed of the attentions that awaited him after the lapse of so many centuries.

Having recovered from the depressing and dangerous attack above-mentioned, Dr. Tytler set to work again, not merely with unabated, but encreased energy of purpose. This time he would undertake a grand and great work that must com-

pel the world's respect. He would transfuse into modern rhymes the whole sixteen books "De Bello Punico" of Caius Silius Italicus, the only other Britannicus who had previously attempted the same task, being the once notable and voluminous Alexander Ross, immortalized, however, much more by a rhyme in "Hudibras" than by his own achievements. *Mirabile dictu*, Dr. Tytler did accomplish the whole of this long work in little more than two years, whilst he still resided at his country-house near the old city of Brechin, but before its conclusion, he had unwittingly earned for himself a host of enemies there. A school-boy might of course write as many rhymes as he could, and no blame would attach to him on that score; but for a labouring burgess, a professional man, who had or should have patients to attend, and who had a wife and family to support, for such a man to commence writing and publishing poetical works in quarto volumes, was something so unexampled and unpardonably arrogant, in the opinion of all his neighbours, that if he had devoted himself to the so-called black art, and openly professed to deal with the devil, matters could scarcely have been worse. The consequences of this were natural enough. He was not merely neglected, but became really and truly a persecuted man, sneered at and traduced. By way of variety, exquisite

witticisms were also directed against him, for example, an alleged relationship betwixt author and translator, the latter being "Sillius Britannicus." In short, Faust was not more maltreated ere despair drove him to invoke the devil, or Major Weir afterwards; though it is true Dr. Tytler found safety in flight, and so escaped being brought to the stake. His home, after the completion of the "Punics" was no longer endurable, so he resolved to quit it, though not without regret, and to make his way to London, that so-styled great mart for the productions of literary genius; but in those days, the transit thither, whether by land or sea, was woefully tedious and expensive.

However, Dr. Tytler and his family arrived safely in the metropolis, where, like most people who come thither with any shot left in the locker, they were at first pleased and flattered by their reception. Here he made the acquaintance of another original genius, and brother poet, the late Mr. John Penn, of Stoke, M.P., also of Mr. Edward Jerningham, and divers other literary characters. But, unluckily, the reflected lustre of Mr. Penn's ample wealth, or of Mr. Jerningham's independence, did not convey much warmth or comfort into the narrow lodgings of the new comers. From such people, he could get polite receptions and praise enough for his labours, but

the solid pudding was to be sought for elsewhere; and Dr. Tytler soon discovered that the trade of literature in London would not then admit such productions as translations of Callimachus, Pædotrophia, or even of Silius Italicus. To bring out the latter was his grand object. It was a huge MS., in three quarto volumes, most carefully written. But no one in all London, Mr. Penn excepted, would read twenty consecutive pages of such a book. Surely Monboddo was right, and the English world had degenerated rapidly; it was much more favourable to authors in days of yore, when Alexander Ross could publish his translation of the self-same poet in grand folio, with glaring copper-plates! But the enlightened world of modern publishers cared not a rush about Dr. Tytler and his new version, any more than they cared for the memory of Silius Italicus himself, or that of Alexander Ross.

To maintain a family in London upon the profits of poetry, in other words, upon nothing, is not very practicable. By dint of persevering efforts a friend obtained at last for Dr. Tytler the situation of apothecary to the forces, then *en route* for, or stationed at, the Cape of Good Hope. So that instead of conducing to a quiet life of retired industry, the doctor's literary propensities had indirectly the unexpected and contrary effect of

sending him and his family afloat on the wide seas for a long voyage, and this when he was already advanced in years, and with impaired health.

It is among the many evils, major and minor, of authorship, that unpublished manuscripts, however precious, are excessively cumbrous and heavy luggage to travel with. Dr. Tytler, however, would not go to his military station without that version of his beloved Silius, which he had prepared in vain for the London booksellers. At the Cape his thoughts were of course diverted from this treasure by novel affairs and duties, till one morning, when, to the utter amazement of the family, there came from a neighbouring store a pound of cheese wrapt in a leaf of the precious work. Instantly taking alarm, the author ran to his book-press, but the inestimable property was all gone. Some faithless menial of the household had purloined and sold the whole for waste paper; and it was irrecoverable, used up and dispersed long since.

I think such an event was quite enough to upset the mind of any author, however well poised and philosophical. Porson might recommence his labours on a Greek lexicon, and he did so, after his first beautiful MS. was burned. It was a work only of patient industry and learned references. But to recompose a poetical translation in sixteen books, wherein already numberless

couplets had been twenty times remodelled! This task would indeed have been too trying for the patience and courage of any literary hero. But the worthy doctor had one consolation. In the hands of his friend and brother poet, John Penn, Esq., of Stoke Park, was deposited the first scroll copy of the translation, and the author fondly looked forward to the time when, returning to his own country, he might have the pleasure of transcribing once more for the press, the whole of his laborious *ouvrage*.

It was when Dr. Tytler was patiently occupied in this work, that I first knew him. Years had passed away, and he had retired from his military post on half-pay, still wearing what used to be called the Windsor uniform, and had at last found a home at Hay's Court, in the suburbs of Edinburgh, where his sons were educated, and where he was often visited by the Earl of Buchan, Lord Woodhouselee, Dr. Anderson, Mr. George Dyer, and other literary friends. But although the three quartos were again beautifully rewritten, and every couplet reconsidered, the ungrateful world would not receive "Silius Italicus;" neither by subscription nor in any way could he be brought forward! In order to mend matters, Dr. Tytler seriously thought of translating from the Greek the entire "Dionysiacs" of Nonnus, a design cer-

tainly novel and original, inasmuch as no Britannicus under the sun had ever dreamed of such an undertaking, and I am quite sure that, had not ill-health interfered, he would have realized the plan, for he was heartily in earnest, and would not have cared a rush for the shouts of laughter and *punnic* witticisms which were again directed against him. His patient perseverance under slights and sufferings was most exemplary.

In the year 1847, passing to and from Bruntisfield Links, moved by kind and grateful remembrances, I went to see his house where I had so often been heartily welcomed. I found it in a state of neglect and ruin. The half-open door seemed dropping from its hinges. The plot of garden in the middle of the court, which he used to cherish, was trodden down, and the railings broken. Poor old Hay's Court had evidently become a place of refuge for the lowest order of the labouring poor.

But to return — in 1803, partly in imitation (very modest this) of Alexander Pope, and partly of Dr. Tytler, I perpetrated, as already said, divers rhymed translations; after which, as a matter of course, came bold attempts at original ode, elegy, and sonnet; all execrable, no doubt, yet considered so marvellous that some of them were forwarded to the then well-known Dr. Robert

Anderson, of Edinburgh, who acted as editor-general to all incipient poets; but that learned doctor sapiently opined that it would be better for the author to wait a year or two longer—he would not say "nine years" but he had better work and wait a little longer before he ventured into public. What a pompous dictator about trifles was good old Doctor Anderson, to whom, *malgré cela*, the late Thomas Campbell, it may be said, owed his great reputation, for without the doctor's help the author of the "Pleasures of Hope" would probably never have struggled into public notice at all!

My good kind tutor had patience to stay with us nearly four years, and as far as he was concerned (only that he would not join in studies of the black art) this epoch of my life might have been most happily spent. Strange to say, one of the pleasantest of my recollections (physically rather than morally speaking) is that of each winter season. In those years, I felt in league, as it were, with the Frost King, and no one of his subjects ever wished more fervently than I did for the continuance of his reign. One indirect cause for this preference was the trouble which it cost me in vain efforts at learning to skate, and the satisfaction I felt at having in the long run overcome the difficulties. I had despaired of this accomplishment, but it happened that, during one

of our friend Mr. White's annual visits, there came a splendid frost, and at breakfast he observed that the loch being such a promising sheet of ice, he must have a turn on it.

The mechanism of skates in those days was not very exemplary, and they are scarcely needed now, our winters being so mild. I remember Mr. White borrowed a gimlet to make a hole in his shoe-heels for the iron peg, a *tour d'adresse* which I should never have thought of; and before we started for the ice he charged me with a commission which I thought rather strange.

"Old fellow," said he, "will you take care to make one of the servants bring down a chair, a common lobby-chair, mind you, with a good back to it? I shall want it to rest upon."

Away went Mr. White, the practised artist, on the glittering loch, "like a feathered Mercury," and after ten minutes' evolutions, kindly returned to the shore, to prepare me, as he said, for doing the like. Instructed by him in the use of the lobby-chair, I held by the back and pushed it before me, getting three tumbles even in this way, but I needed no farther instructions, and the chair was discontinued after a day or two's practice. Many a winter's day afterwards I skated for hours together with my good friend Dr. Glennie, who had been habituated to this exercise as the

best mode of pedestrian movement from town to town during the winter in Holland.

Mr. White delighted in country life and the adornment of grounds. True it is, that this propensity was also professional—he made money and largely by it; but he delighted in his vocation irrespectively of the profits. The last time I spoke with this worthy man was accidentally at the Saracen's Head, Snowhill, in 1834. If he yet lives to read these pages, he will accept my kind remembrances.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SHERIFF'S POT.—MANNERS IMPROVE, BUT MORALS REMAIN IN STATU QUO. — EARLY NOTIONS ON POETRY. — EDUCATION AGAIN.—MEDICAL SCIENCE.—DR. WILLIAM WRIGHT.—HEALTH AND STRENGTH IN THE MIDDLE AGES.—THE AUTHOR COMES TO RESIDE IN EDINBURGH FOR HIS IMPROVEMENT.—A LONG YARN OF EGOTISM RESPECTING FIRST IMPRESSIONS THERE.

I THINK it would be very needless and tiresome to dwell any longer on my days of boyhood. My respected tutor took his departure in 1804, being installed as clergyman in the parish of Garvock, where he had a most dreary secluded residence, and wherein, nevertheless, he seemed most perfectly contented. I visited him there afterwards, in the years 1809-10-11, when he seemed equally cheerful. I used to put up my old black pony at the Manse, and we had long walks together, a favourite haunt of mine being the *soi-disant* "Sheriff's Pot." According to legend (it is said, indeed, that there are MS. proofs), a certain sheriff of Kincardineshire had made himself so odious that the barons of the county tormented the court with accusations against him, and petitions

for his dismissal, to such degree, that one day in great wrath, the king exclaimed: "Sorrow gin ye boil him and sup him in broe,"—in plain English, "boil him, if you like, and eat him in broth."

How the sheriff himself could either be boiled or eaten, is a metaphysical question which, I fancy, no one would think of raising in our enlightened days, any more than our wise ancestors did then. They were what we still complacently call "good men of business," practical, straight-forward men, who took the king's words literally; and so they invited the sheriff to a grand hunting-match in the forest of Garvock, to which, good unsuspecting creature, being fond of such field-sports, he assented. There in a desolate, lonely glen, they had prepared an enormous fire, over which was a gigantic caldron full of seething water. Of course they all fell upon the sheriff, dragged him from his horse, stripped him and threw him into the pot, and when the hellish murder was completed, each of the conspirators took a spoonful of the broth. Such was intellectual nature! Such were the performances of so-called rational beings in those days. Have we improved since? In modes and manners assuredly: in disposition or principle, as I believe, not a jot. We don't invite the objects of our dislike to hunting-matches now, in order to boil them alive, and afterwards plead the crown's

sanction for the deed; but we do persecute them unto death, and we sometimes endeavour to continue our persecutions even after death, with quite as much complacency and effrontery as ever our barbarous ancestors could exhibit. In such cases, moreover, we practise a refinement of which the old world barons were incapable. They did not affect to deny that their proceeding was *un peu trop fort*, and though they possessed the king's sanction literally, they yet humbly sued for his pardon. On the contrary, our performances of like nature are conducted with so much suavity *in modo*, so guarded by prudence, and law, and "religion," and what not, that we never avowedly do any wrong, but are always immaculate, and justifiable upon one specious pretext or another.

But to return, it seems to me that I might very properly cut out of my log-book all that relates to the period from 1804 till the latter end of 1806, an interval which might have been well employed on my part, but it was not so. After the departure of my tutor I retrograded instead of progressing. Being no longer subject even to the *formula* or semblance of regular lessons, I was left to my own vague dreams and illusory notions, muddling my brains by perpetual reading and writing as usual, with no one to give me a hint as to the *principia*, or proper drift, of any one pursuit.

During this period, however, my own notions about poetry had undergone a complete revolution, partly from repeated reference to Drake's "Literary Hours," but still more from attentive study of Milton's minor poems; the first edition of Thomson's Autumn (under the name of Winter); a certain ode on the approach of Summer, by Thomas Warton; beyond all, of Beattie's "Minstrel," which I had never duly appreciated till then. Henceforward, my poetical readings and attempts at composition were invariably carried on out of doors; and during the months of May and June, in the early mornings and brilliant evenings, I could find realized in our own woods all the vivid descriptions of nature contained in Comus, Lycidas, the Penseroso and Allegro. I knew quite well that in capacity, I had not any nearer relationship to Milton than a farthing rushlight has to the sun; but this consciousness by no means interfered with my triumph and delight at realizing his descriptions, and at being able to commune with the same nature under the same aspects which he had commemorated. It was yet more easy to identify and appreciate Thomson's descriptions of the fading many-coloured woods, and the deeply meditative stillness of an October day. These early impressions remained indelible in after life; moreover, being left in this pursuit

without any Mentor, I took up the fixed notion that a poetical author was estimable or contemptible, precisely according to the degree in which he cherished this principle of communion with the seasons, with that mysterious "other self," with that all powerful energizing life, which pervades woods, fields, lakes, rivers, and mountains. If a poet thoroughly appreciated this life, he then, *selon moi*, deserved to be upheld as a model; if not, he was a mere mechanical verse-maker and pretender.

My own compositions rapidly increased in number, and soon filled a quarto volume: but with regard to this pursuit to which so much valuable time was devoted, I never had heard from any counsellor that poetry should have any higher drift than that of extorting praise and wonder from the reader; or if the author was afterwards very fortunate, of extracting gain from the pockets of a money-loving public. The second of these aims could have no interest for me. I knew that there was no want of money amongst us at present; moreover, I felt convinced that the stores thereof could hardly ever be exhausted; one of the most unwise and hazardous conclusions that could be instilled into the mind of a young person. That poetry, in order to deserve praise, should have a rational, intelligible, and moral purpose, in the conscious aim

at which the author should feel more satisfaction than in any wondering plaudits that are bestowed on him—of all this I heard nothing. Nor with regard to other pursuits and employments did I hear of any better drift or recommendation to be borne in mind, than that above stated, namely, that such and such professions were to be the means of acquiring both distinctions and wealth.

That before the aspirant dared to dream of such distinction, or could honestly finger one fraction of the reward which in our most Christian world is valued more than heart's blood, he should thoroughly sift the question whether by the profession he has adopted, he can render himself useful to the world and a benefactor to others, and should remember that the profession cannot gain honours for him unless he does honour to his profession—of all this I heard nothing. That in every sphere and walk of life the important places are perpetually occupied, and that the chance of supplanting others, or finding room for one's-self, depends on superior strength, superior ingenuity, and superior powers of industry—of all this I heard not a word. Oh! it is a wise advice—an exemplary cry, that of "choose a profession, and don't sit down to plant cabbages!" But I would beg respectfully to submit the reflection, whether in the case of any young man, it might not be

better to cry: "try to discover what, by nature or previous education, he is fitted for?" And if the result should be at all satisfactory, then follow up the vein with patient industry. This would be a sensible cry.

According to this view, it would not matter a rush what was the choice of a young person, if only he showed the first grand requisites of genius, namely, sincere interest in his purpose, and a proportionate disposition for consecutive labour, and to despise obstacles. Let it be for mathematics or metaphysics, poetry or painting, cabinet-making or clock-making: if he takes to it lovingly, and is, therefore, willing to encounter labour and difficulties in the cause, let him be encouraged therein to the utmost. But never lead him on by the bait that he is to excite wonder and acquire plaudits. In that case he would think less of his own duties than of the sugar-plums of praise. If, for example, he took to mechanics and tried to make a Laurencekirk snuff-box, but one day shook his head in despair of being able to equal his model—I should remind him that George Stiven did not *begin* by producing any such work, and that his ambition must first be fixed on acquiring that command of temper, that patient, all-enduring assiduity, that indefatigable heroic spirit of constancy whereby the said Stiven had gradually

arrived at the power of perfecting such a box! This truly is not an easy matter, but he should be reminded that if the indispensable basis is once laid, the superstructure by dint of unremitting perseverance is very sure to follow. There is no other way unless he became the humble disciple of the artist, and the said artist should be willing to teach. In that case, too, he could only work like a mere automaton, without ever achieving any real progress of his own, unless he acquired and practised the virtues on which I have just now commented.

I have been led to make these remarks, *en passant*, because, after the departure of my friendly tutor, wise people occasionally favoured us with their visits, who kindly inquired, "What is he to be? What profession will he fix upon?" Following up their queries with the usual assertion against planting cabbages. But not one of those wise advisers ever started the question, what the object to whom they referred was fitted for? Perhaps they descried clearly enough that the answer thereto would be very unpromising; or, perhaps, they went upon a gambling principle; "fling him into the water; possibly he can swim; who knows?"

In early years, my health was very infirm; I have never, during fifty years, been *quite* free

from illness, and in those days the science of medicine or treatment of diseases was upon the whole in a sad state. *Negatively* it may have improved since; that is to say, patients are allowed to live now who would certainly have been *killed off* then! My old friend and botanical ally, Dr. William Wright, who lived himself to an extreme old age, had long ago been preaching the cold water cure in fevers; indeed, in all curable diseases, for it was his *panacea*, his hobby-horse, and he scarce thought of aught else, except his Galenical discoveries. Time, with Priessnitz's aid, has realised all of which the good old doctor was only allowed to dream; for notwithstanding his very quiet, sedate, unassuming manners, he acquired the character of a queer (in plainer terms, half-crazy) "bodie," merely because he had got hold of a medical truth, a mere *truism* now, and would perversely cling to it! The college treated him with respect and politeness, no doubt; perhaps they pitied the old man's *monomania;* but the majority, I suspect, went upon the old track. Typhus and small-pox still had their numberless victims. Instead of ice-cataplasms for the head, and currents of cold fresh air through the apartments, flannel nightcaps heated at the fire, windows closed, and blankets multiplied—such had been our prevailing practice. What is now re-

garded merely as common sense upon such occasions, was flung overboard wholly, but our doctors could look quite as wise and prescribe as confidently and plausibly without it, entertaining, no doubt, a conscientious dread of rash innovations. It was an excellent Malthusian practice; overpopulation was inconvenient sometimes, and ought, therefore, to be kept down!

I might have noticed before now, that, although sixty years had passed away since Lady Mary Wortley brought the discovery from Turkey, it was not until 1790, or thereabouts, that inoculation was introduced generally in the north of Scotland. I remember Dr. Troup, of Aberdeen, issuing circulars about it in 1795; for indeed it had not even then become general. Only certain bold practitioners ventured on it, against whom their wiser and more experienced brethren still shook their heads. And there were not wanting great numbers of elderly people who shook their heads yet more portentously, and said it was a "tempting of Providence!" But this is a digression.

There are individuals, no doubt, who naturally possess such robust constitutions, that they can bear up under any treatment, can live on, and thrive under any circumstances. Of such I reck not. It is a common remark, how much more

athletic and healthy people generally were in the middle ages than they are now, from which, by vastly close reasoning, it is inferred that hard fare and discomforts, and inconvenience of all sorts, were favourable to health. Truly, the community, both nobles and serfs, were stout and stalwart in those warlike times, simply because the weak and invalid could not live at all. They conveniently died off. It was closely analogous in effect to the Lacedemonian plan, where amiable parents, on pure patriotic principles, put to death such of their offspring as, from weakness or deformity, were not likely to render good service to the state. Certainly they could not have tolerated in those days any such example of human nature as Alexander Pope, with his crooked back and spindle shanks dozing in bed half the day, and getting up by fits to heat potted lampreys in a silver saucepan, and indite heroic poems! I repeat that our medical science was then in a sad state, and I have misgivings that it is but little better now. For my own part, after falling into very ill health in 1804, I never made an approach to recovery, till ten years afterwards, when, without any professional adviser, I determined to act contrary to all the prescriptions and advice before given, and trust to cold-bathing, diet and exercise, especially on horse-back, as the means of restoration.

Once more "to return!" Making a broad leap, I shall move on from 1804 to 1806, when it was agreed, according to the suggestion of a near relation, that I should pass the next winter months at Edinburgh, in order to be matriculated at the University there, and should sojourn, with three other students, in a house regulated by a graduate of the University of St. Andrews, assisted by a French teacher. The latter, in truth, was the major domo or *maître d'hôtel*, and the *eruditus* acted as his assistant. A more inappropriate or ill-advised plan than this never was tabled, but it had been painted *en couleur de rose*, and was approved accordingly. My friends accompanied me to Edinburgh, remaining there only a few days. At the first glance, and after a few searching questions, my father perceived that the establishment of the French teacher and the M.A. would not in my case prove beneficial, either as to the *mens sana*, or *corpus sanum*. I approved of it as little as he did, but the arrangement was fixed, and he returned home gloomy and disappointed. From that period his health began rapidly to decline.

In Edinburgh I have spent the happiest years of my life, but my commencement there was most unpropitious, the next six months being among the most unprofitable and wretched that I ever

encountered. The causes for this were extremely obvious, for my previous habits of life and so-called study were completely upset and superseded by changes which were certainly not an improvement; and, secondly, betwixt the five individuals with whom I now sojourned, and myself, there was hardly one solitary idea or *penchant* in common. Never, consequently, was there any new-comer more unfitted for the station in which he was placed, or who had more reason to feel like a fish out of water.

To my new preceptors or fellow-students not a shadow of blame was due. They could scarcely help laughing sometimes at my odd ways, uncertain health, and eccentric caprices, but they all endeavoured, after their fashion, to be kind, indulgent, and considerate. Such kind intentions, however, were of little avail. In their house it appeared to me utterly impracticable to carry on any study that required unbroken attention; it was like a bedeviled house. In plainer terms, it was like what I could have imagined for the scene of a hideous dream, wherein all ordinary precautions and appliances for comfort and well-being are subverted and nullified; although for my daily companions, whose nervous systems were not disordered, and who were under no self-imposed obligation to rack their brains over so-called

orginal compositions, it nevertheless appeared very suitable and *comme il faut.*

In one of the obscurest and most ill-famed streets in the oldest part of the new town, was our abode, being a *flat* in one of those delightful edifices (places of punishment, as I thought) called "more majorum" *lands.* In those lofty buildings, every floor formed a separate domicile, and all were accessible by a gloomy winding common stair. At Paris, it is true, people do live comfortably in *flats*, and in the really new town of Edinburgh, I believe there are *lands* where, now-a-days, the lodgings are commodious and unexceptionable. But ours was after the worst old fashion; it was a land of seven or eight stories high, with a vicious and disreputable common stair, our ward in this place of punishment being in the fourth or fifth *étage;* but of course there were beings so horribly perverted and abandoned, that they lodged even higher than we. The lowest pitch of moral degradation must have been that of the wretch who had his lair at the top. I do remember that this infatuated being had also a brass plate on his door—if door it could be called, which looked rather like a fantastically-contrived shutter for the exit or entrance of some wild beast. It did not face the landing-place, but stood off in a corner, and had a peculiar stair leading up to it, as if there had not

been stairs enough already in the house, which was almost as high as a church steeple. He must have been an original, this man, making choice as he did of the "lead chambers" in our dolorous mansion. If I remember right, his profession was that of a "writer," or "king's messenger" (*Anglicè*, bailiff) of the lowest grade, and in his practice truculent and merciless.

Every house or lodging at Edinburgh used at that time to exhibit the name of its owner blazoned athwart the door on a brass plate. We were, I suppose, the *élite* of our land, and our *maître d'hôtel* not only had his name ostentatiously brazened, but even went so far as to set a winking lamp, of rush-light fed with train oil, over the door, during the long winter nights. This enviable domicile consisted of a dining-parlour, commanding, it is true, a magnificent prospect over the Old Town; a *prunkzimmer*, or drawing-room, which looked to the street, a cold ghastly-looking apartment, so "tastefully" furnished, that it must not ostensibly be inhabited, except upon state occasions, but wherein our learned master of arts reposed by night on a sofa-bed. There were only three other rooms, one of which was monopolized by our eldest pupil, another had three occupants, (of whom, myself one); the third was kept locked, and belonged to the *maître;* it

must have been requisite also to find space for two female servants, both of them bulky. How *they* lived, I cannot tell. To all appearance they had only the kitchen, and it was extremely small.

I have seen some varieties of life since then, but never anything more thoroughly detestable than this *ménage*. I remember the first night of my sojourn there. Unfortunately I came to sojourn; it was to be my home; and at first I was obstinately predetermined to find it praiseworthy and good. I remember the two dusky lank mutton candles, by the aid of which, at a table covered with an unsteady rag of green baize, sat the *eruditus* and the two younger disciples, all three solemnly engaged in writing out portions of Levizac's French Exercises. The senior pupil sat in dignified quiet at the fireside, reading, or seeming to read, "De Lolme on the British Constitution." This I knew without prying, as, for the sake of conversation, he kindly inquired if I had read it? Of course I had not, for what is called "solid reading" was then quite as much out of my "line," as poetry and romances assuredly were out of his. I might have asked him in return, whether he ever read Milton's minor poems, a miniature edition of which I then always carried as a pocket companion. However, I soon found that reference to it in my present abode would

never do. The contrast betwixt Milton's glowing descriptions of life among verdant fields and woods, with its iron realities on an Edinburgh common-stair during a severe winter, was too violent and disheartening.

I shall never forget that first evening. At half-past nine the *maître d'hôtel* came in, rubbing his hands gleefully, after having given his concluding lesson out of doors for the day. He was one of those enviable specimens of the human race, which are often to be met with in France; heroes who fortunately can endure almost any degree of privation or fatigue without murmuring; who can one day partake freely of a rich banquet if it falls in their way, and for a month afterwards live contentedly on rations of cabbage soup with rye-bread, and for luxuries, some weak coffee or *eau sucré*.

"Supper, supper, gentlemen!" he exclaimed in French, "for I am half an hour behind my time, and you must needs be hungry. Besides, it would not be polite to keep our new friend waiting till I correct your exercises."

He then briskly lifted the candles and writing apparatus, twitched off the green baize, and bawled for Marie to bring the *souper, tout de suite*. I had already shrewd suspicions that the promised supper would neither be very elegant

nor profuse, but I was not quite prepared for what followed. A *nappe de table* (*considerablement tachée*) having been spread by the beautiful Marie, we were served with a so-styled omelette at one end, and a dish of *pommes de terre frits* at the other. Three or four hard eggs, cut into halves, set into some dingy milk and water, like floating islands, this formed the omelette; and the other delicacy consisted of thin slices of cold boiled potatoes, which had been placed to warm on a gridiron, and were now nicely blackened and smoked. For second course, as this was a *fête* night, we were indulged with six little square morsels of cheese, and a plate of raw apples, so green and sour, that to eat one would, I thought, have been a certain means of incurring illness for a week. And to crown all, when the mighty feast drew to its close, a bottle was mysteriously placed on the table, containing a little remnant of that most exhilarating and delightful beverage, whiskey distilled from potatoes. Of this precious fluid, each pupil was allowed three tea-spoonfuls, in a wine glass, which, with hot water and *cassonade*, made a charming beaker of toddy. The *maître d'hôtel*, in consideration of his fatigue and exposure to the night-air, allowed himself a little more. The master of arts, who was a man of

great bodily strength, took none at all, wisely judging, I suppose, that such beakers of toddy were a mere mockery, and *mauvaise plaisanterie.*

Insignificant as these details will seem, they might serve for an abridgment of all my impressions as to my new abode, inasmuch as the plans there for so-called study and intellectual culture were quite as droll and perplexing to me as the arrangements of the supper-table. The key to explain the remote cause of these perplexities, and of this discrepancy in character, is very easily supplied. These three youths were sons of a country gentleman of acquired property, a long-lived man, who had always steadily kept his expenses within his income, thus had of course every year grown richer. The lessons which he had inculcated on his sons had been in few words, *multum in parvo*, first, to save money out of the most limited allowance; secondly, make money by all means, or to lay wise plans for so doing as soon as possible. These were the lessons, and these, when properly considered, included a summary of morals; for to save money would necessarily involve habits of self-denial, moderation, and a very intimate acquaintance with that prim, starched, cold-blooded, and, if truth be told, sometimes shrewish virtue, named Prudence. Moreover,

nothing could be more clear than that in order to make money, they should imitate good examples, also should cultivate the good graces and good opinion of those who had already succeeded in the world, and arrived at affluence. Now, in order to secure good will from the rich, it is indispensably needful that one should never appear to be either in want of money or too directly in quest of it, this being another grand point gained, as it involves a practical lesson not merely of economy and self-denial, but of that indispensable accomplishment for a successful man of the world, to wit, duplicity; an accomplishment which the aforesaid Mademoiselle Prudence often strenuously inculcates.

Fortified and guarded by such excellent precepts, these young men, together with their learned preceptors, were perfectly impenetrable to notions such as mine about the proprieties and comforts of home, the *locale* of a house, or arrangements of a supper-table. The floating islands, the potato fritters, the infinitesimal squares of cheese, the sour apples, and potato whiskey, *selon eux*, were all excessively good as an example of moderation and economy, seeing that the entire cost of such a banquet could scarcely be more than three-halfpence per head.

In order to guard against misconception of my

own character, such as it was, I must beg to observe, that had the change in my previous habits of life been confined merely to stinted provender, I could have endured this with the equanimity of a monk or anchorite. I would, indeed, have been heartily glad, if, by sacrificing luxuries, I could have gained the tranquillity and independence of the monk in his lonely cell. What I afterwards felt cuttingly, was that the current of my favourite studies became inevitably thwarted and broken. The same principle of worldly wisdom which regulated our *ménage*, influenced also our studies; it was for me a main-spring of opposition and mischief; verily, by means of it, the house was bedevilled! I am very sure the same evil spell had reigned there ever since the foundation-stone was laid of our so-called *land*. At this time, along with my poetical exercises, I was obstinately bent upon extending my acquaintance with Greek and Latin authors. I would willingly have undergone great labour to acquire sufficient power over these two languages. But this propensity was only sneered at. Our French master had, after the custom of his own country, performed his "academical course," which had not led him far, and there he rested content. Our Master of Arts, after the custom of St. Andrews, had done the same thing, and he did not perceive

any trace of necessity for going one step farther. On the contrary, I pertinaciously and impertinently maintained that the beaten track ought not to suffice, and that, by sufficient toil and courage, treasures might be exhumed from the classical mines, which had been unduly neglected. Alas! no one but myself, or my friend Dr. Tytler, could perceive how such fancies could tend to any good, and as to the paramount object of pecuniary results, I did not myself pretend to hold out any brilliant prospects. Respecting poetry, in the estimation of my new friends, I might as well have proposed twisting ropes of sand, or reading fortunes in the clouds, as devoting time and strength to such a visionary pursuit. It "*proved nothing;*" but, *per contra*, though I could not deny the irrefragable character of mathematical proofs, I cared quite as little about such proofs when afforded, as my friends did about the originality or melody of a sonnet! There were authorized studies enough in all conscience. I might have met with help and co-operation in politics, law, natural philosophy, chemistry, mathematics, engineering, land-surveying, navigation, and so forth, but not one of these accorded with my perverse humour.

I had my own plans, and persevered in them; at least, the fervent will remained unbroken. I

cared not a rush for the arts of money-getting or money-saving. Books, rare and curious volumes neglected by other people; labour, persevering labour, for its own sake, but otherwise with a view to open some new and unexplored path in the maze of literature; classical learning, because it connected itself with the pursuit of poetry—these were among my leading "crotchets." Worldly prudence I recked not of. My books had taught me that the world was contemptible, and I had already received education in a very peculiar school. Take, for example, the following remark:—"I need not warn you against the prevalent acceptation of that *infamous* adage, a penny saved is a penny got." *Verbum sapienti;* this passage occurred in one of my father's letters about this time; it will suffice to show that my previous training had not been that of "Mr. Worldly-wise Man."

CHAPTER XIII.

PROFESSORS DUNBAR AND CHRISTISON.—GREAT ADVANTAGE OF LECTURES ON GREEK AT EIGHT IN THE MORNING.—RECOLLECTIONS OF SIR JOHN LESLIE, AND OF THE REV. THOMAS CHALMERS.

I HOPE to break off shortly this yarn of unmixed egotism, yet cannot help observing that my remembrances of the morning are as indelible as those of the preceding night. I awoke early, during a cold, dismal, November fog. The very street-cries in that vile district had a peculiar character, and were also bedevilled. There were only two, namely, *Sa-aund* and *Sa-aut*, but these were reiterated in various intonations, all more lugubrious and distressing than can be imagined, sounding like lamentations of woe-begone persecuted wretches, and possibly enough were so in reality. On this particular occasion, breakfast had been served in the *prunkzimmer*, or drawing-room, in order, perhaps, that I might be favourably impressed by its elegance, and admire its chairs of deal, painted to resemble bamboo; its chintz-covered cushions and

ditto window "draperies." I found here only the senior pupil in *robe de chambre*, complacently turning over the leaves of De Lolme's constitutional treatise, and could not help thinking to myself that the constitution of Monsieur ——'s private academy very much needed radical reformation. But from the outset I resolved that I would as much as possible resist all such revolutionary impulses, would conform cheerfully to the usages of society in this new phasis, and hold fast by the thread of my favourite studies in spite of external discomforts. I avoided the parlour fireside, and moved my desk from corner to corner, and from room to room, seeking for quiet, endeavouring to think myself at home, and to recover the current of my scattered thoughts.

Ostensibly, I had come to Edinburgh to benefit, by attendance for two or perhaps three winters, at our far-famed University, which at that time attracted students of high rank and eminent talents from all countries. Even young men of the world, whose education was completed, would here begin again *de novo*, considering it an honour to have their names enrolled in the books of Mr. Dugald Stewart and Mr. John Playfair. Not to lose any part of the previous nurture afforded by this Alma Mater, I had been advised to attend for the first season the lectures of Messrs. Leslie, Dunbar,

and Christison. That all three were most estimable men, and that the first was a veritable genius I think no one can dispute or doubt. But during my whole life I can scarcely remember hours more wearisome or more unprofitably spent than those of my attendance on their lectures. The fault, of course, was entirely mine; others might profit by such attendance, but I could not.

Of the three courses in question, that of Mr. Dunbar, on the Greek language, appeared to me the most irreconcilable with principles of common sense. At Oxford, the student is expected to rise early, and begin the day by attending a short service in chapel. I can understand this well enough; but why any youth should be doomed to trudge along the streets in the cold, dark, dismal, winter mornings, before eight o'clock, in order to attend a service of Greek, I cannot, even at this day, satisfactorily explain. In my blind ignorance, I imagined that if college lectures began every day at ten o'clock and ended at four, this might suffice every rational purpose. In such way, it is obvious that two or more professors would be at work during the same hour, but I am not yet able to comprehend why any student should be so vehemently avaricious of knowledge as to desire hearing them all, instead of making his choice for the present session, and postponing this or that

course till the next. Besides, we had every day a second service of Greek at two o'clock; and, notwithstanding all these exertions, I expect that our number of profound Greek scholars was woefully limited.

No matter for the weather! We might have rain, hail, snow, frost, hurricane, or, as it often happened, a *mélange* of all five together, the unfortunate student who had once entered his name on the professor's book, was expected to attend this early course. Too truly, there were no benign emanations of philological light attainable by these early pilgrimages through the matutinal air of Edinburgh streets or within the dreary walls of the class-room. No, nor from the good professor himself, as he sat there with pale composed visage betwixt his two dingy tallow candles, could any such elucidations of Greek literature be derivable as an hour's study *on right principles*, at the home-fireside might not have supplied far better! "On right principles," I have said; for if a teacher thoroughly understands his duty, it is no long or difficult task to instruct a willing scholar *how* to proceed. The rest can only be accomplished by his own industry.

Of what utility, then, were the Greek lectures? No doubt they must have been of importance, otherwise would not have been attended; but in

my stupidity I could not perceive any advantage thence derivable, unless it were a lesson *morally*, from the exemplary patience, calmness, and forbearance of the truly amiable professor. To establish order in his class-room was impossible. The students all felt shivering and impatient. Many were half asleep. Snores, protracted yawns, and other indecorous noises, with practical jokes of divers kinds, wore through the long hour. I soon found that regular attendance on my part was here out of the question. I held on merely so far as to avoid special censure, and even to gain praise for a most pitiful morsel of *soi-disant* poetical translation.

Of Professor Christison's course, I need say nothing, as the remarks I have so freely made respecting lectures on Greek, would apply equally to those on Latin, only with this difference, that Mr. Christison, greatly to his own and his hearers' comfort, did not make his appearance till eleven o'clock, when the then dreary and unfinished college was cheered by wintry sunshine.

To Sir John Leslie, of whom I have the kindliest recollections, a whole chapter might be devoted, were it not that I shall have probably occasion to meet him again more than once before these retrospections are wound up. That a shepherd-boy, the son of a "cotter," on the estate of Mr. Fer-

gusson of Raith, should one day be discovered in the fields, at work on a difficult problem, with one piece of *household slate* scratching on another, and thereafter should be sent to school, the said Mr. Fergusson paying for his scholarcraft—this was only a fortunate chance, showing discrimination and kindness on the part of the laird. But that step by step, the uncouth *protégé*, retaining in his manners all the *naïveté* of his first intellectual state when he lay on the heath scratching the slate, should within a few years progress so far as to occupy a professor's chair in the Royal College—this indeed demonstrated the pre-eminence of Genius. By its innate energy he displaced competitors who were well-born and well-bred, who, instead of being "cotter's" sons, possessed all advantages and comforts from their infancy onwards. His mind had naturally conceived with intense force those principles of mathematical and physical science of which the mere *embryo* lurks in every mind, and he had the power of developing and applying his conceptions in such manner as to command the respect of all who were qualified to judge.

As a teacher of the mere *tyrones* in mathematics, Professor Leslie could render little or no service;—unless they had a share of mother wit akin to his own, they needed the aid of a private instructor.

He always gave his hearers credit for powers which they did not possess. The whole basis of his science was so perfectly natural to him, he was so much accustomed to think and reason by means of the geometrical point and line, that he fancied he might appeal to his audience, as if the practice had also become natural to them. Accordingly, he merged into the most complicated problems even at the very outset, and his grotesque physiognomy often lighted up with pleasure at some scientific *finesse* or *concetto*, whereof his hearers (two or three excepted) could not form the remotest notion. He was somewhat in the predicament of a good-natured giant, who, in play with an ordinary individual, gives him a jocular tap, and is perfectly amazed to see him topple down; only with this difference, that Leslie did not stop to express his wonder at not being understood, but went on comfortably under the conviction that he had done his duty, and that if others lacked sufficient strength and calibre of intellect, he was not called on to supply such deficiency.

At his private rooms, however, he was always easily accessible, and willing to enlighten any student, however humble, who came to him with a sincere love of science, would even work down after his own fashion to the low level of an aspirant and tell him what to do. Of this an example

occurred in my own case, for being invited to his house, and having mentioned my long past and then obliterated studies of authors magical, he insisted that in their works, however unequal, there were yet many admirable hints, and during two hours thereafter he busied himself in explaining to his poor stupid visitor, a series of experiments in which he had lately been engaged, and which, as far as I remember, all hinged on certain curious and novel applications of the air-pump.

Professor Leslie, as all the world knows, was occupied from the outset not merely with the science of quantity alone, but with the wide range afforded by chemistry, optics, astronomy, and all the varieties included under natural philosophy.—He entered with so great zeal, such a hopeful, buoyant, youthful spirit into all his calculations and investigations, and they filled up his time so completely, that I regarded him as one of the best humoured and happiest of mortals. Among the last times we met together at the convivial board, it was with our mutual friend Sir William Hamilton in 1826. Being placed next to Sir John Leslie, I started after dinner the subject of the so-styled lunar discoveries recently made in Germany, and respecting which I had written a poem printed as leading article in Blackwood's Magazine under the title of "A Winter Night's Dream." I expected that

the Professor would have ridiculed the newspaper paragraphs of the day, in which it was averred that the Viennese astronomers had descried churches and towns, as well as mountains, seas, and forests in the moon. To my agreeable surprise, however, he took up the question very seriously, not indeed expressing his belief in the statements from Germany, but insisting that the moon had been most scandalously neglected, and this not from indifference or incapacity on the part of scientific men, but from their want of private fortunes and from the apathy and selfishness of the rich who would not adequately assist them. Warming with this subject, he declared that if properly supported, he would construct in the Queen's street gardens a telescopic tube equal in calibre and length to the Pictish round tower adjoining Brechin cathedral. "But," said he, "supposing that a poor professor could do this much, the lenses required for my purpose must be of such novel and peculiar character that the expense on that head alone would be so great as to render the plan quite hopeless, unless munificently aided by the public or by some one spirited patron."

Dr. Andrew Duncan, jun., who sat opposite, tried *more suo*, to puzzle Sir John with objections. "You have a strong arm, it is true," said he, "but will not a telescope of calibre like that of the

Brechin steeple, be rather ponderous and difficult to work after it is erected?"

Sir John was the best tempered man that can be imagined, but not the most courteous. "Doctor," said he, "I would recommend to you by way of amusement, a few hours study of the mere rudiments of mechanics, which perhaps you have neglected. Give me the sinews of war and I will construct machinery in such manner that my telescope shall be moveable by the slightest touch even of your arm, weak as it is, as well as of mine. Nay, more, give me *sufficient* funds, and as a civil engineer I would engage to move the round tower from its present stance at Brechin, and establish it uninjured on the top of Arthur's Seat."

Leslie joined heartily in the laugh raised against this very needless undertaking, though he insisted that it would not be without its utility, in proving how far the powers of a civil engineer might extend; and as to the moon, he still maintained that if gifted with adequate funds he would search throughout Europe till he found an artist capable of making proper lenses according to his instructions; moreover, that eventually if there were towns and inhabitants in the lunar regions, he felt confident of being able to descry as much as would establish that fact, and place it henceforth beyond the reach of doubt.

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But to return;—in 1806, Leslie, without seeking for it, had acquired much public notoriety. His recent election to the mathematical chair had not been gained without paragraphing, speechifying and pamphleteering. All the *literati* of the modern Athens were in his favour; the wise magistrates and most of the clergy were for another candidate, in order to promote whose cause they fixed their attention on a certain note in the appendix to Leslie's treatise on Heat, from which they chose to infer that his religious tenets were not orthodox. This afforded the mainspring of their opposition. "Mr. John Leslie might be a very clever man, there was no denying that, and so far as mere talents went, perhaps there was no one more eligible for the chair." But then, with pious horror they declared that a man who would dare to interfere directly or indirectly with the sacred tenets of the infallible kirk of John Knox, could not possibly be chosen by them to wear a professor's gown. Think of what dangers might ensue. The whole of Scotland's promising youth, *hitherto* bred up to become exemplars of Christian faith, hope and charity, might gradually be corrupted by such awful insinuations as were too evidently contained in this note. Nay, the very talents, mathematical and literary, of this man

must inferentially be viewed as dangerous and destructive, because their influence would add so frightfully to the force of his heretical example!

The *literati*, however, and common sense together, proved too powerful for the *soi-disant* saints, who only succeeded in earning for themselves contempt, by their unfair opposition raised against a man who had never in his life dreamed of interfering with any one's religious creed, and who at all events, whatsoever might be his own opinions, had at least this advantage over his factious accusers, that he was no pretender—no hypocrite.

Have not all men distinguished for innate genius been remarkable also for unaffected simplicity, for *naturality*, if the word be admissible, of manners? I can hardly remember any contradictory instance. *Mannerism*, in great variety, may no doubt be observable among them; and by superficial judges, that which either is or has become natural, is most erroneously ascribed to affectation. In like manner, peculiar habits, eccentric caprices, morbid weaknesses are ascribed to the same cause. Be this as it may, Sir John Leslie had the honour of retaining through life not only the same enthusiasm for scientific labours and investigation, but the same frank and unaffectedly *natural* manners which he might have

exhibited had he been left in Fifeshire, to rise from the station of shepherd to that of a petty farmer. No worshipper of the Muses could ever be more absorbed in his harmonic art or delightful visions than Leslie was in his pursuit of scientific reality. His whole attention seemingly was fixed on the essential, the *wesentlich*, and yet he had his dream-world quite as much as the poet. Respecting his absence of mind to ordinary impressions, a rather marvellous example occurred in Holland, where one evening, being in company with some friends on the Boompyes, at Rotterdam, intent on an astronomical problem, he was pointing to the stars, but found his view intercepted by the houses. Quite forgetting the necessity of measuring his own steps on *terra firma*, he rashly backed towards the edge of the pavement, till all of a sudden he toppled over into the deep river Maas. How such a man, who, like Falstaff, must have had "alacrity in sinking," could escape with life on that occasion, unless by miraculous interposition, I cannot tell; however he did escape, and I believe never afterwards complained of the accident.

Sir John enjoyed convivial life with great zest, especially when the rallying point was a good dinner. But for friendship's sake, in the spirit of good fellowship, he would accept an invitation in

quarters where the cheer was not exemplary, for I remember his partaking more than once of a *symposium* (dinner, I mean) *chez nous*, at our delightful abode during the winter of 1806, which I still cannot think of without a shudder. At these meetings his conversation was completely in the style which the French distinguish as *abandon*, but was not on that account the less valuable, for there was a quaint originality in all that he said, and he never failed, in the course of the evening, to bring out divers recondite theories and strange hypotheses of which no one but himself had ever dreamed. On such occasions opposition or *quizzing* was to him perfectly innocuous. He turned off an objection or sarcasm with as much indifference as a rhinoceros would show to the missiles from a pop-gun, and maintained his ground with equal obstinacy and imperturbable good humour.

The last time I ever saw the worthy and kind-hearted professor was in London, at the house of Mr. R. Ferguson, M. P. Continued habits of good living since his promotion to the comfortable chair of Natural Philosophy, had begun to tell on his robust constitution, and with his usual *naïveté* he complained in his host's presence of being tired of London and its grand dinner parties, which I thought an unfavourable sign.

Another of our occasional guests, during the winter of 1806, was a young student from the University of St. Andrews, namely Thomas Chalmers, who, I believe, had not then assumed the title of reverend, nor even dreamed of being dubbed Doctor of Divinity. In truth, I think no one could then have rationally predicted or guessed in what particular path of life a spirit so energetic and yet so versatile would at last determine to move. I have spoken of the *naïveté*, the *naturality* of manners which distinguishes men of genius. In no individual was this ever more remarkable than in Thomas Chalmers.

Retaining the broadest Scotch accent, he spoke with rapidity and fervour on subjects numberless and completely incongruous. Considering his force and calibre, he might indeed have seemed born to grapple with all pursuits and all sciences; in this respect, unlike his friend and contemporary, Dr. Brewster, another of our visitors, who, with pale pensive countenance and quiet demeanour, had decidedly adopted a preference for mathematics and the various branches of natural philosophy. A third among our guests was Dr. Thomson, professor of chemistry at Glasgow, a great genius, as I was told, but who seemed to me of a wayward, snappish, and suspicious temper, as if somehow he believed that all the world were secretly in league

against him, but as I never saw him afterwards, I know not whether this fancy was well founded.

Of these three, Chalmers at the time made the deepest impression on my mind; and no wonder, for he entered with equal zest into all studies, theological, poetical, political, metaphysical, and mathematical. Apparently there were no obstacles too great for him. Difficulties could not weigh him down, because he was *au dessus de tout cela;* he could look down upon the difficulties, and he trampled on them; yet no one could say that this was the effect of arrogance. On the contrary, the consideration of his subject, or object, whatsoever it might be, was paramount; it absorbed his attention; he was not disturbed by the morbid sensibility and idiosyncrasies of genius, and the consideration of *self* disappeared utterly.

As already said, no one could predict what would ultimately become of such an erratic genius. He might very well have turned out a merely imaginative writer (fortunately for himself he did not) a violent political partizan, or the founder of a new religious sect. There was only one profession, and that the most powerful and prevalent at Edinburgh, into the track of which I cannot suppose it possible for him to have subsided, and this was the occupation of a cold-blooded, sordid, money-grubbing "writer to the signet!" He

evidently required and was determined to have some employment which could be followed out with grave, solemn, heartfelt enthusiasm; and this he afterwards established for himself: the character of a presbyterian clergyman assuming under his management a phasis certainly rare, I may say almost unexampled.

During the following winter, when I no longer suffered from the vile discomforts of "our land," Chalmers occasionally honoured me with an evening visit, when he would turn over with avidity the black letter volumes which I had begun to collect; falling into ecstacies, I remember, at what he then saw for the first time, namely, the veritable *editio princeps* of Gawin Douglas's translation of the "Æneid," where the truly original "prologues" of the translator riveted his attention.

At these meetings our talk was often of old books and poetry, of all such authors as the world never read, especially the remnants of ancient Scottish poetry; but lastly, and particularly of Sir Walter Scott's "Marmion," which was then going through the press *before it was written*, and the unparalleled effects which his rising genius had already produced on the literary world.

CHAPTER XIV.

REVOLUTION IN LITERARY TASTE BEGUN IN GERMANY.—DECADENCE OF THE FRENCH SCHOOL.—SIR WALTER SCOTT'S EARLY STUDIES.—OUR HATRED OF INNOVATION.—ENLIGHTENED CRITICISM ON WORDSWORTH'S POETRY.—MY VISITS TO DR. TYTLER.—THE REV. DR. BLACK, OF COYLTON.—HIS LIFE OF TASSO, AND OTHER WORKS.

Our conversation of those evenings, if it could be recalled, might well occupy an entire chapter; but more especially that part of it which related to the rising fame and influence of Walter Scott. It would, indeed, be somewhat strange if a writer of retrospections should begin and end his book without any allusion to that great revolution in literary taste which took place in Europe betwixt the years 1794 and 1806. There can be no doubt that in those changes the Germans led the way; indeed they began to manifest newly awakened life, twenty years earlier than 1794, Lessing and Gerstenberg striking the key-note.

In all European countries, at that time, there prevailed a vile slavish *mannerism* in poetical composition, which, in all its varieties, epic, ode,

elegy, or sonnet, must be *classical* forsooth, or it could not pass muster. Every author was less or more under the thraldom of what not inaptly was called the French school,—a school which boasted of having produced such models of artistical perfection, that no one but a madman could think of surpassing them, either in choice of subjects, tone of sentiment, or power of expression. To such a degree was this infatuation carried, that poetical authors in Germany, Sweden, and Denmark, even essayed piteously to write in the French language, repudiating their own. There was to be not only a *langue universelle*, but a species of literature *universelle*, in which there might be variety as to names and *locale*, but there could be no hope of intrinsic novelty or improvement, the pinnacle of perfection being, as above said, already won. We did not, of course, carry absurdity to this height in England or Scotland; yet we had our mannerism, and we clung to it most tenaciously! Pope and his numberless imitators held their ground. There were, no doubt, a few lonely spirits that moved in a very different track, such as Thomson, Collins, Beattie, and above all, Burns; but they had not influence enough to cause a general re-action.

At length, towards the epoch with which these hasty records commence, the German poets did completely burst their trammels, the revolution

having been established by "Krafftmänner" (*power-men*), such as the aforesaid Lessing and Gerstenberg; but more especially betwixt the years 1780 and 1790, by Klinger, who carried matters *à l'outrance*, and paved the way for his contemporary Goethe, and the illustrious Schiller. I have always compared the effect which Klinger in his wild but natural energy produced, to that of Kean and Miss O'Neill on the stage. In both cases there was an appeal to nature, with a disdain of slavish conventionalism, and the mechanical trickery of art.

It is very remarkable that men of original genius in all ages have delighted in recurring to the earliest and even rudest models, no doubt because they found therein traces of the *vivida vis*, and of those immutable principles which are "ever ancient, ever new." Accordingly, one of the most distinguishing traits in the literary revolution of Germany was their resuscitation not only of their own early literature, but that of England, which for the last hundred years we had perversely neglected, as if it were unworthy of our notice. With Ludovic Tieck for their guide, they afterwards learned to perceive the inestimable worth of our early English dramatists, not of Shakspeare alone, but of his distinguished contemporaries, and they studied them with perseverance and enthusiasm.

Instead of striving with all his might to come up to the standard of conventional affectation, the poet began to think that affectation had much better be discarded for that which was natural. This latter course no doubt was by far the most difficult. It required sensibility and "*verve*," but no less did it require patience, courage, indefatigable perseverance and *art*, in the higher acceptation of the term. Klinger, as I have already said, carried his naturality *à l'outrance*, but Goethe and Schiller, much as they differed from each other in age and in temperament, both proceeded with caution as well as energy. The changes which Gerstenberg and Lessing had begun, were followed up by Goethe with the calm steadiness of a practised artist, and by Schiller with a fervid and, at first, wild enthusiasm, which he afterwards corrected.

Instead of intending a critical discussion, I have during these remarks never lost the thread of my conversation with Dr. Chalmers, in 1807, and of the literary character of Sir Walter Scott. I wished, however, to claim for the Germans the palm they so justly deserve for having been the first to fling off the yoke of conventionalism, and establish an example for other nations. Sweden and Denmark followed immediately, or rather moved simultaneously.

Scotland, with Sir Walter Scott for a leader, was

the next. France, as was natural, held out the longest. She indeed was occupied with another kind of revolution, but a time did come when the reaction in France was greater than it had been in any other country.

Returning to Scott, and the influences of Germany on his career,—Bürger, though not much of a dramatist, was of the school of Schiller and Goethe in his mode of study. He loved to take nature for his model; he loved old ballads and old chronicles, he detested those conventionalisms *soi-disant* classical, by which Wieland, with all his genius, had been in some degree enslaved. But Bürger was nevertheless a hard student, an excellent scholar, a most elaborate artist. Not even our own fastidious Tom Campbell ever bestowed more care upon a minor poem than Bürger did upon his "Lenora."

Sir Walter Scott being from infancy addicted to literary pursuits, also having a fondness for antiquities, and having collected old ballads before he heard the name of Bürger, would in all probability have contributed to the literature of his country, without any incitement or inspiration from foreign sources. Yet I have always been persuaded, that had he not chanced (and in those days it was a rare chance) to get some German lessons from a competent professor, and had he

not also chanced to have "Lenora" and the "Wild Huntsman," placed before him as exercises, we should never have had the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," or the "Lady of the Lake." The key-note was struck, the innate powers of the young student responded, he translated those two ballads *con amore*, and they were so much wondered at for their novelty of feeling and expression, that the translator's character was at once established as an extraordinary person. He had done what no one before him had accomplished; and, moreover, there was no one in all Scotland who could do the like. Consequently, the attention excited by those versions of "Lenora" and the "Wild Huntsman," printed in quarto, by Ballantyne, at Kelso, insignificant as the matter was in itself, formed in great measure the basis of all Sir Walter Scott's future achievements as a poet.

But, although he succeeded, most assuredly the literary revolution in Scotland was not accomplished without a struggle. We were disposed to be quite as obstinate against improvements in this respect as in others. Lavater's aphorism was very applicable in the case of Sir Walter Scott, who never lacked detractors and enemies. Notwithstanding private friendship, Edinburgh critics sneered at his poems as often as they conveniently

durst. Yet divers circumstances favoured his career, and he triumphed. In other instances we did not fail to mark our critical acumen, and our extreme abhorrence of innovations.

It is true that by no efforts of criticism could we "put down" the "Lay of the Last Minstrel." Even the ballad of "Rosabelle," and the description of Melrose, by moonlight, were alone enough to keep it buoyant, notwithstanding that the poem was decidedly at variance with all our acknowledged models. The author had begun humbly by translating from Bürger, and by imitating old ballads, but progressing, he had achieved a work such as was till then unexampled, and purely original. Moreover, the patronage of the Buccleugh family attended it, so that the author had influence political as well as poetical, and consequently the publisher did not hesitate to pay 600*l.* for the copyright; an event such as had never happened before to any poet within the enlightened realm of Scotland, where Burns, after devoting his attention for years to a series of lyrical compositions which will never die, and which became afterwards a fortune to his patron, did from the said patron receive as recompense for all his productions—the handsome sum of 5*l.*!!!

But at the date of my present chapter, there was another poet who, though more experienced

than Scott, was then rising slowly but steadily into notoriety, and who contributed most powerfully to the regeneration of literary taste, I mean Wordsworth; and we did flatter ourselves that, with the help of the "Edinburgh Review," not only should we keep him down, but absolutely extinguish and annihilate him. We had already crushed and demolished a certain "lordling," who had the temerity to fling a volume of so-styled poetry about "Dark Loch-na-gar," and other stuff before us. He was disposed of and settled (as we believed) for ever, at least as to his poetical aspirations; and William Wordsworth, after a few more spasmodic writhings, would no doubt resign his foolish pretensions, and disappear in like manner!"

In 1806, the only works of Wordsworth, as yet published, were the "Lyrical Ballads" in two volumes, and "Poems," also in two volumes, bearing date, I think, either that year or 1804. Of these, the second only had fallen in my way, and among our wisest men at Edinburgh (Scott no doubt excepted), the contents were pronounced decidedly, irredeemably bad. The "Lyrical Ballads" were simple and childish, and the long preface thereto was incomprehensible, but the "Poems" were really beneath criticism, and merely ridiculous! I remember the said productions were on my table one evening when Chal-

mers called. He pounced on them as something new, and began to read, but grew very much perplexed, and said: "Is the man crazy?" Especially, he stumbled and puzzled over the beautiful stanzas on the "Dog of Helvellyn." My lamented friend, Dr. Black (afterwards of Coylton), came in, and both of them laughed vehemently at the line: "What is the creature doing here?" In those days, within the enlightened circles of Edinburgh, to admire the greatest of living poets would have been thought either madness or affectation. Dr. Chalmers, however, took rather a different view of the matter. He pored over the poem, and said at last, "There is merit here; there is good feeling and good sense, if only the author had known how to express himself properly!"

Such were the yet lingering effects of our obstinate conventionalism and affectation, grown into second nature. But here I cannot help noticing for a moment a seeming incongruity in my own records. I have humbly advocated the cause of progression and originality, yet have no less wished to advocate the propriety of looking to past ages as affording guidance and even inspiration. But the light of reason and of genius existed in all ages; it was found lonely and isolated in days of yore, as now. It is by the neglect of that light that society falls into a state of savageism. To

recall its gleams as they illumined the paths of eminent predecessors in centuries long past, has ever been a favourite employment with men of the most original genius.

Britain congratulates herself on her great wealth and power, whilst nowhere else, scarcely even in Russia, can we meet with such hideous examples of misrule, with demoralization and misery in such violent and extensive degree. And yet to the neglect of one ancient record, namely, of that imperishable code of laws signed at Runnymede, are ascribable all the evils which politically weigh on the people of England. To uphold its principles, to apply them in their purity at the present hour, would be to eradicate by the roots the demoralization and misery to which I have alluded. There is not a grievance that is not foreseen and guarded against in that charter. From the time of Henry VIII., when its provisions were openly trampled on, up to the present date, our conduct as moralists and politicians has always become more and more irrational, because we more and more cleave to motives of mere expediency, making them into principles as idolators made gods and goddesses of their own vices and passions. We do not absolutely abhor innovations; on the contrary, the wildest speculator will entrap the greatest number of gulls, but we do loathe and detest all improve-

ment, moral, physical, or political, which it requires moral courage to support, or close reasoning to comprehend. We abhor close reasoning. And, notwithstanding Archbishop Whately's efforts, we are to this hour disposed to regard logic not as the law or science of reason implanted by the Almighty, but as an artistical "invention" of Aristotle, or of the old schoolmen!

To return: my useless attendance on the three or four professors already mentioned, most woefully discomposed all my usual habits, and on coming home to our detestable lodgings, I could not settle to study, but always felt ill, disappointed, wearied, and miserable. My best hours of recreation (unless I except dinner parties and "routs") were not very gay. For example, I used often to spend the hours from three to five o'clock at the suburban residence of Dr. Tytler, who had now finished in MS. the third edition of Silius, which vainly awaited a publisher, and who though very infirm, was cheerfully girding on his armour for new exploits, particularly that of translating the "Dionysiacs" of Nonnus! Most cordially we joined together in railing at the present state of literature and literary patronage at Edinburgh, where publishers, instead of paying (except in the case of Sir Walter Scott), expected to be paid, and no taste for "Punics" or "Diony-

siacs" existed even among the *soi-disant literati*. Notwithstanding total want of encouragement, numberless were the literary schemes devised at these meetings. We could not deny that the "Edinburgh Review" was a clever work, but in those days, very surely the "Edinburgh Monthly Magazine" afforded as pitiful an exposure of pompous pretension and intellectual debility as can well be imagined. I proposed that it should forthwith be superseded by a monthly repertory, on a new plan, wherein we should set established rules and conventionalism at defiance, and accordingly I drew up, and printed a prospectus, to some copies of which was appended an autograph *notandum* by our noble friend the Earl of Buchan, announcing his determination to support the work as a contributor. The rest of it, I think, was to be made up entirely by Dr. Tytler, his daughter Margaret, and myself. I don't in the least doubt that a first number of this promising miscellany would have been launched had not a near relation, quite of another *genre*, interfered with a few words dictated by Prudence, which acted as a damper, and extinguished this rash emanation of literary ardour. I think our expenses in printing and publication for that winter were confined to a favourite production of the Doctor's own, namely a translation of the "Stoic King," from Seneca, followed by some versions

from the minor poems of George Buchanan. I took immense pleasure in acting as *commissionaire* betwixt author and printer; but was somewhat disgusted with the world and discouraged, when after completing our little work, we found that no publisher "in town" could effect the sale of a single copy, and we got neither praise nor blame. The doctor consoled me, however, by saying (too truly), that this was nothing new to him, and it was the fate of learned and ingenious men to be neglected and despised, whilst dunces got on by trickery and worldly stratagem.

I have mentioned dinner parties. At one of these, *chez* Mr. Malcolm Laing, M. P. for Orkney, I had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of my lamented and kind friend, the late John Black, D.D., author of the "Life of Tasso," in two volumes quarto, and divers other literary productions. At that time, I believe, Dr. Black thought as little of becoming a clergyman or doctor of the church as Chalmers did at the same period; but Dr. Black was not versatile in his employments. His mind was then entirely occupied with the pursuits of poetry and romance, above all with the study of Italian literature. His delight was to spend the entire day, from nine or ten o'clock till four, in the closest application. During the evenings, he would willingly enough lay aside

his manuscripts and converse by way of recreation, if there were any one present worth talking to.

This learned and amiable man had recently published a volume, entitled the "Falls of Clyde; or, The Fairies," a dramatic poem, certainly original, for there has not been aught like it before nor since. In that *jeu d'esprit* occurred many descriptive passages, by which it was clearly proved that the author was no conventionalist or *book-taught* poet, but had painted his landscapes from living nature, wherefore I greatly honoured him. I remember how resolutely I *cut* my college classes for the following day, as I could think of nothing but my first visit to a newly acquired ally, whose literary character I already regarded with so much respect.

My impressions were deepened by that visit, and remained indelible. "Low down in the broom" of the deep ravine below the Calton-hill, in a house of two floors only, with large commodious rooms, where from the windows nothing was visible but green sward and a few blighted trees, so that one might forget the existence of town altogether, was the abode of Dr. Black. He coveted quiet and seclusion as much as I did, and he obtained what he sought. Ostensibly he was then acting as tutor to a young Orkney laird of competent fortune, who gave his preceptor as little trouble as

possible, by showing the most decided and invincible repugnance to all sorts of study. Consequently, Dr. Black had his time almost wholly at his own disposal. His life of Tasso was already far advanced, and he avowed to me with great satisfaction, that with the help of Tiraboschi and other annalists, he could almost tell what Tasso had been about during every day of his life. It is, indeed, most remarkable in Tasso's case, that the records of his own unhappy existence are far more interesting and romantic than the most elaborate of his poems. And yet the said records are only the chronicle of his wayward caprices and miseries. There are in them no "moving accidents by flood and field." The scene only changes from the palace or convent to the prison vaults, and the vicissitudes of feeling are from the dazzling illusions of Hope to the dark heavy clouds of despondency. And yet on these materials how many poetical tributes to his memory have been founded —take for example Goethe's and Byron's Tasso.

I have wished that my retrospections should convey a faithful picture of our state of society, particularly as regards the progress of literature and science. Dr. Black shared the general fate (with one illustrious exception) of all authors amongst us, who struck either into a new path, or into an old one which had long been grass-grown

or neglected. Very surely, had he relied on the opinions and suffrages of his countrymen, his work never would have been undertaken, far less achieved. Indeed, as to all foreign literature, whether old or new, the French excepted, we seemed to hold it in utter contempt. Moreover, our knowledge of the French, also, was woefully superficial, and as to Italian, we rarely aspired thereto. Of German we remained so profoundly ignorant that in the year 1806, I am very sure all the booksellers' shops at Edinburgh could hardly have supplied more than a dozen volumes in that language. It was among us all but formally proscribed!

Under circumstances like these, it is almost needless to say, that Dr. Black during his labours remained insulated and alone, or that when the subject of those labours was proposed to our enlightened publishers, they received it, *me ipso teste*, with shouts of derision, adding benevolently, some expressions of pity that the author's "wits should have gone so very far a wool-gathering!" Equally superfluous is it to observe that the author in his retirement heard of such remarks with the most perfect equanimity. Indeed, he was always ready to join heartily in the laughter excited by his employments, only with this difference, that he himself felt diverted at the self-complacency of the

critics by whom he was surrounded, and at our determination to "put down" whatever we did not understand.

But Dr. Black, at his lonely fireside, was by no means without sympathy and encouragement; only he had to look for these far across the Tweed. At Edinburgh, I think his literary connection was restricted to Lord Woodhouselee (the best among our very few Italian scholars) Mr. Malcolm Laing and Mr. John Dunlop, advocate, author of the "History of Fiction." Dr. Black, however, wrote letters beautifully, and he was cheered by communications in return from Mr. Roscoe, of Liverpool, Mr. Hayley, and other authors of a *genre* unknown at Edinburgh. Lastly, the late Mr. John Murray, publisher, did by no means opine that to undertake a biography of Tasso argued insanity on the part of the writer. He was, I believe, certified by Lord Woodhouselee that the work was of its kind a good one, and when it was completed, offered, and paid, 150*l.* for the copyright, which Dr. Black's advisers thought very inadequate, but with which he himself was most perfectly contented.

Years elapsed before my respected friend Dr. Black quitted his retirement at Edinburgh, and when he did so, it was to be installed as minister of the Kirk of Scotland, at Coylton, in Ayrshire, moved thereto by his increasing love of consecutive

literary labour, for which better opportunities would be afforded by the clerical profession than by any other. But in his new situation, instead of adhering to the studies of poetry and romance, he by degrees gave his mind to deep theological researches; and henceforward, if he visited Edinburgh at all, it was in the hopes of ferreting out and obtaining the rare books indispensable for his new pursuits. I have heard the late Dr. Maginn speak in the highest terms of a work which Dr. Black published about the year 1825 (*chez* Murray in London) as being pre-eminent for learning and novel investigation. By that work, as I have been told, like a second Dr. Geddes, he drew on himself the opposition and enmity of all his clerical brethren, so that he was not merely insulated and alone, as heretofore, but tormented and persecuted by evil tongues. Whether this *on dit* be correct, I cannot tell.

My last interview with Dr. Black, took place at Edinburgh, I think, in the Autumn of 1824, when most unexpectedly, he met for the first time with Southey, who was seated in my library turning over some volumes of Spanish poetry, which, *mirabile dictu*, he had not seen before. It was a most pleasant and joyous meeting. After the first five minutes, they spoke together as frankly as if they had been acquainted for thirty years; and as

my friend's quarto volumes on the life of Tasso had by no means escaped Southey's attention, he was doubly glad to meet their author. Dissimilar as their characters and stations might otherwise be, two lonely students, both with an intense love of books and literary research, must needs have much to reciprocate and talk over.

On that occasion, Southey was travelling about for relaxation and amusement with Mr. Telford, the celebrated engineer; but he honoured me during his very short stay at Edinburgh with two visits, to which I may refer hereafter, but at present I ought to write about the year 1806, and must not anticipate.

CHAPTER XV.

EDINBURGH WHIGS.—MR. MALCOLM LAING, M. P.—HIS HISTORY OF SCOTLAND, AND EDITION OF OSSIAN.—THE ABBE MACDONALD.—MODE OF TEACHING FRENCH.—OUR NATIONAL ANTIPATHY TO METAPHYSICS AS A SCIENCE.—THE REV. J. MULLENS, OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Of our politics or political world in 1806, scarcely a vestige remains in my mind. I only remember that the Whigs were then in power, a circumstance which had been hailed with immense satisfaction by the representatives of the party at Edinburgh; but their triumphs were of short duration, as within six months thereafter they were all out again.

In those days, the character and example of Charles James Fox seemed woefully misunderstood or neglected amongst us. Undeniably, he was the *facile princeps*, the leader of the Whig party, and as everybody knows, he was in manners and disposition simple, unpretending, kind-hearted, fervent, sincere, and wholly regardless of worldly gain or distinctions. *Per contra*, instead of *taking after* this great leader, an Edinburgh Whig too

frequently was *rusé*, suspicious, arrogant, ironical, cold-hearted, except as to his own worldly advancement, and most especially given to a tone of sarcasm and contempt against all the world except the leading members of his own particular *clique*. In short, the *phasis* of Whiggism at Edinburgh was not amiable.

I have promised to notice decided characters, and must not leave Mr. Malcolm Laing out of the category. In private life he was kind, hospitable, simple, and unaffected in his manners, delighting most in the comforts of his own study, and a *ménage* suitable for a country gentleman of moderate fortune. The profession of a barrister, which he practised in early years, by no means accorded with his invalid health, and he gradually abandoned it. In his literary capacity, Mr. Laing had one leading principle — the mainspring of his activity,—namely, he must be at war, or he could not move at all. His pen would drop lifeless on his paper unless there were some object to be battled for with bitterness. An adversary must be preconceived and pointed at, no matter whether the said adversary had or had not intended to give offence. In authorship, Laing's object invariably was to prove that others were in the wrong, and ought therefore to be exposed without mercy. I fear he once thought that all religions equally were

the productions of human weakness, and priestcraft taking advantage of that weakness; but if so, he had the good sense never to obtrude his opinions on society. As a neighbour, he was humane and courteous—as a literary character, truculent, and might have taken as his motto "Τινα βαλλομεν ?"

With these peculiarities no one could have been better fitted than he for an Edinburgh reviewer; but I rather think he entertained a contempt for periodical literature, as being time-serving and ephemeral. His principal achievements are the History of Scotland under the so-called reign of Queen Mary, and his edition of the works of James Macpherson. In the former he essayed to demonstrate the asinine absurdity and ignorance (or intentional blindness, which you will), of those eminent authorities who had wished to defend the character of that most miserable queen. With the *verve* and vivacity of an enthusiast he ferretted out evidence, and patiently worked his case against the poor woman, till, according to his own entire conviction, he had substantiated irrefragably the most hideous charges against her. It is almost needless to observe, that his labours after all did not settle the question; he himself might be thoroughly convinced, but others were not. As little did he succeed in his latter work,—the object

of which was to prove that Macpherson was the most impudent and reckless of modern literary impostors. With this intent he reprinted (probably at his own cost) the whole of the said Macpherson's early and acknowledged poetry, which had become invisible and obsolete in the author's life-time, seeking to prove by citations that in these early productions the author had been the most insatiable of plagiarists; moreover that the so-called poems of Ossian were merely a clever *remaniement* in a strange dislocated masquerade style of those very plagiarisms which he had before committed. In short, it was an attempt to prove from internal evidence that Ossian was a humbug; and with supreme contempt for the bard's partizans, who in his opinion were nearly as deserving of reprobation as Macpherson himself, he prefixed to the presentation copies of his work this characteristic quotation:—

> "When the pipes begin to play
> Tutti tatti, to the drum,
> Out claymore and down the gun,
> And to the rogues again!"

Hereupon followed an ironical dedication to the Highland Society of Scotland (or London), and to the Committee, with Sir John Sinclair at their head, who had pledged themselves to bring out Ossian's works in Gaelic (*from the original manu-*

scripts ! !), and by that means settle the question of authenticity for ever.

To some readers it may appear very needless to offer any remarks on works so well known as those of Mr. Laing; but I believe his Ossian is not merely out of print, but has by this time grown rare even among collectors of old books;—for my own part, I do not wonder at such a publication being forgotten. I only wonder the work should ever have been printed at all, or that so much altercation should have taken place in the literary world about Macpherson. Rail-roads and scrip have utterly superseded and obliterated his memory now. A sheaf of penny Punches is worth more in our market than would be the *editio princeps* of Ossian, richly bound in Russia and lettered in gold! The authenticity of the bard, however, is an *idéal* which no patriotic Highlander will ever resign. For my own part, I never could feel much interested in the contents of Macpherson's book, simply because the imagery is so dislocated and unconnected. I can quite well imagine a poet dwelling on the self-same train of thought, till, possibly, it becomes tiresome to every one but himself; but I cannot think it possible that a veritable minstrel should deal in mere *patchwork*. Even on this ground, however, the late amiable and learned Abbé Macdonald, of Crieff, differed from

me *toto cœlo*,—he insisted that Ossiąn's songs were *dithyrambic*—that he poured them forth either in a state of intoxication or of ecstasy, during which the ordinary rules of association and logical sequence were entirely overlooked. Mr. Macdonald treated Mr. Laing's elaborate work with the utmost contempt; and as a proof of the affection with which he himself regarded Ossian, he translated the whole of the prose poems into Latin verse publishing his work in a handsome royal octavo, of which the expenses, I suppose, were paid out of his own infinitesimal stipend. Truly this undertaking was even yet more eccentric than my friend Dr. Tytler's versions of Silius, Callimachus, and Nonnus!

My constant visits to Dr. Tytler, Dr. Black, Dr. Anderson, of Heriot's Green; also, to Mr. Mullens, an Oxford graduate, who then resided at Edinburgh, and my continued dreams of literary achievements gradually caused a kind of schism or coolness betwixt me and our two domestic preceptors. Obviously enough I did not care for aught which either of them was willing to teach, nor could become reconciled to their methods of teaching. Even at the rudiments of the French language, and at the First Book of Euclid, I stumbled, and am very sure that I should equally have stumbled and stuck fast during the rest of

my life if there had been no better instructions than those imparted at "our land." With regard to French, our professor informed me that before attempting to read a book or compose an exercise, I must learn to repeat Levizac's examples of the French verbs by rote;—I winced at this from the beginning, assuring him that I should never make any progress in that fashion; but he had only one method, and whatever might be the difference of intellects among pupils he would not swerve from it. Indeed the admirable concinnity and clearness with which the French conjugations can be reduced to rule, seemed in those days to be unknown; or, perhaps, the teachers did not wish to smooth the path too much, seeing that by this means their gains would be lessened. I did what I could—I transcribed those wearisome verbs over and over; but when desired to lay aside my papers, and called on for the parrot-like performance of repeating them, I invariably broke down and got angry: so the threshold was never crossed. And be it observed, that up to that period, and for long years afterwards, I remained utterly ignorant of the *metaphysical principles* of language: and no wonder, for I am not aware that there existed any mortal in all Edinburgh who could have helped me in that matter. In truth, I rather think Monboddo's *dictum* was believed, when he said "lan-

guage was not natural to man." This was no more than a fair carrying out of Locke's wise aphorism, "no innate ideas." And quite possibly we were contented with his lordship's original mode of reasoning, when he assumed that the education upon which depended our power of language must take place without the previous gift of any innate faculties to which that education could be addressed!

In mathematics, no doubt, we were close reasoners. Our arithmetic could be so comfortably illustrated by means of a purse filled with splendid shillings or guineas bearing the fine intellectual features of "good" King George the Third; and Euclid's point and line reminded us so pleasantly of the money that might sometimes be gained by merely measuring the fields of a fair estate, though we could not possess it! But I feel convinced that we detested logical and metaphysical reasoning, inasmuch as it did not admit of tangible or visible demonstration, and we also remained in profound ignorance how such pursuits could possibly be brought to bear on our paramount object, namely, utilitarianism. In short, metaphysical science was reckoned nearly as unprofitable and absurd as poetry. It "proved nothing." And to such an extra pitch of wildness was this dislike carried, that we actually sought to deprive mathematical know-

ledge of all its dignity. We ignored and "blinked" the truth that the so-called exact sciences owed their exactitude not to experience only, but to their metaphysical basis on the universal laws of time and space, which exist in the mind of the wildest savage as decidedly as in that of the most learned professor. Usually we only "ignored" this important truth, but in his "Philosophical Essays," Dugald Stewart actually went so far as to deny it, expressing his belief that "our notions of space" (and, by inference, no doubt of time) are "abstracted from our experience." How we can abstract from our experience that which assuredly it does not contain, or how we can reconcile such doctrine with the definitions and axioms of Euclid, and with the universality which cleaves to mathematical proof, Mr. Stewart did not think it necessary to inform us. It is almost superfluous to add that the hours I devoted to Euclid, were quite as unprofitable as those which were spent in trying to repeat the French verbs by rote. I had the great advantage of being attended by a private teacher whose example and precepts soon clenched into downright aversion, what on my part had been merely an indifference to mathematical study.

Finding that Greek and Latin authors, if not proscribed in "our land," were by no means over-welcome there, our preceptors being both of opi-

nion that after a certain course had been gone through, any further attempts at progress would be both useless and absurd,—I sought elsewhere for a collaborator, and, as I at first supposed, found one in the late Rev. J. Mullens, M.A., of St. John's College, Oxford. But unluckily, the leading object or mainspring of his labours most woefully differed from that of mine, and I thought to myself that Mr. Mullens being a fair specimen of an Oxford graduate, it was not to be wondered at if young men of rank were sent to perfect their education under the advice of Messrs. Stewart and Playfair at Edinburgh.

New or unexplored mines or veins of literary interest, original compositions or translations having the *verve* of originality, unflinching labour for the accomplishment of some novel purpose, regardless alike of praise or blame, moreover a thorough conviction that men of original genius were often viciously and unjustly treated by the world, these were objects, principles, and tenets which had long since drifted into my mind, and become rooted there. From believing, not without reason, that original genius was often ill-treated, it became a natural *sequitur* to believe that precious treasures might be brought to light from the dusky repertories of old, neglected libraries; and in this notion at all events, instead of being left quite alone, I

soon had numberless abettors, the so-called Roxburgh club, though yet without a name, being already in its embryo.

In the year 1806, accordingly, I became a subscriber to the "Censura Literaria" of Sir Egerton Brydges, which, during years afterwards, riveted my attention, every number containing, here and there, traces of originality and vivid feelings such as were little to be expected from an author who proposed to his readers nothing more than an antiquarian repository. This fondness for neglected old books, if well regulated, might alone have given one enough to do. But although not without compeers, I was in this pursuit, as well as in every other, left without any intelligible Mentor.

As for my new friend, Mr. Mullens, I discovered *gradatim*, that his mind was quite impervious, hermetically sealed against the entrance of every one of those cherished objects or tenets which I have above enumerated. Our polar-star at Edinburgh was utilitarianism. Apparently, that of Oxford, in those days, must have been mere ostentation. To my friend Mr. Mullens, I never attached the shadow of blame. He was, indeed, a man of remarkable talents; high-spirited, and struggling at once with infirm health and the *res angustæ*, for which I honoured him. But in his literary and

clerical character, he was what Oxford enjoined him to be, and I presume he sincerely thought that her doctrines were infallible. Motives are inscrutable, but judging by his conduct and expressions, I must believe that his leading principle of action might best be characterized by the French expression, *pour briller*, or the Latin *ad captandum*. He composed his sermons with great care, sparing no pains, for which also I honoured him. Many times, on going to his door, I have heard a tremendous uproar within; his voice, which was powerful, being raised to its fullest pitch in vehement debate with himself over the necessary preparation of a sentence or paragraph whereby he desired to plant some excessively hard hits. Indeed, every sentence was elaborated in this way. He prepared for Sundays most conscientiously, and in that respect his sermons were a model. But as to the subject matter, the doctrines or their efficacy, I never could discover that he took any deep interest. His compositions must "read well, and sound well," in other words, must be effective *ad captandum* and *pour briller*, and if so, all was right.

As to my vague notions about new paths being opened in literature, *selon lui* it was all raving and illusion. Our duty was to move properly in the paths already known. Unexplored mines indi-

cated mines that were not worth exploring; and as to men of genius being neglected, it was a deceitful cry raised by those who had not mother-wit or industry suitable for getting on in the world; men who chose perversely to run after will-o'-the-wisp, instead of adhering to such wise leaders as were always to be found at Oxford.

The Rev. Mr. Mullens certainly exhibited a phasis of character very different from that of any other pedagogue whom I had hitherto met; but alas, the conventionalisms of Oxford soon became quite as tiresome in my estimation as those of Aberdeen, St. Andrews, or Edinburgh. Marks and models were very properly set up to be aimed at; but these were considered the *ne plus ultra* of scholastic progress. On one point, however, this Oxonian was to me a most welcome auxiliary. Disgusted as I then was with Edinburgh, which I viewed of course through the murky, bedevilled atmosphere of "our land," I could not quarrel with a preceptor who far transcended Samuel Johnson in his contemptuous vituperation of the state of manners, morals, literature, of all, in short, that could be met with after having had the misfortune to cross the Tweed. His remarks were naturally acrimonious, for he had not succeeded in any of the plans which led him to Edinburgh, and he had in part a basis of

truth for his censures which gave them undeniably their force. For example, he seized with eagerness on every opportunity that fell in his way of exposing our incompetence in the manufacture of Latin verses, in which he with some reason thought himself an adept, having at St. John's College been the author of a successful prize poem. Unluckily, some one thought of putting in as evidence in our behalf, a Horatian Ode, written by Burns's "Willie Nicholl," on his own approaching death, and which we had always reckoned excellent; but Mr. Mullens was by no means softened by its mournful sentiments, on the contrary, he grinned and sneered, and at last thundered out his expressions of contempt upon the discovery, as he said, of errors hardly pardonable in the merest tyro, "and these blunders, these cacophonies, and vulgar slip-slopisms had been perpetrated by a master of the High School, who, instead of keeping them concealed among personal memoranda, in his own desk, sent them out to the world as a model! And all this in Scotland, where we could once actually boast of a George Buchanan! As a literary nation, how we were lost, fallen, and degraded!"

Proceeding at this rate, Mr. Mullens of course made himself enemies without number. Very surely we had fallen back on the route *ad Parnassum*, and could not produce any living

representative of George Buchanan; but Mr. Mullens did not content himself with this vantage ground; he censured almost everybody, and every thing, making, as far as I can remember, only four exceptions, namely, Mr. Jeffrey, Bishop Sandford, Mr. Alison, and Mr. R. Morehead. "Our land" afforded him infinite amusement. It was the *rummest* specimen of an academical establishment that he had ever seen, but in my own case he undertook to make up for all defects, if only I would resign a portion of my time and attention to his management, which I did almost every day, thereby quite unconsciously acquiring for my insignificant self a share of that enmity which was always becoming fiercer against my worthy instructor. This was indeed inevitable. On every point wherein Edinburgh differed from St. John's College, Oxford, he railed against the former, and upon every occasion when he had reason to think that Oxford manners would be wondered at in Edinburgh, he grasped at the opportunity. For example, on Sundays he must needs walk the streets in his canonicals, which he rendered as conspicuous as possible by wearing additionally his insignia as chaplain to a nobleman, and member of a college. On week-days he would parade in top-boots and brilliant buckskins, prepared evidently to follow the hounds, though unluckily, there were at the time no hounds to follow. In

such conduct I could not see aught wrong, but others did, simply because it was unusual. We were as obstinate conventionalists in our way as any Oxonian could be in his.

My recollections of Mr. Mullens are kind and grateful; but as we did not agree as to the proper drift of literary labours, how could we pull cheerily together? The late amiable Mr. Sotheby was among his personal friends; yet the translation of "Oberon," with all its beauty and elaborate finishing, was unworthy of consideration, and why? "We know nothing about Wieland at Oxford, sir! Talk about him there, and you would be pooh-pooh'd down to a certainty. Read my friend Sotheby's translation of the 'Georgics.' *That* I grant you, deserves to be called a work. It is admired even at St. John's College."

Such principles of criticism,—such dogmatical decisions were to me utterly disheartening. I cared nothing about St. John's College, and I would much rather have been author of a translation of "Oberon" than of the "Georgics," merely because the former had the zest of novelty, and opened a new vein of the literary mine. I made no real progress under the instructions of Mr. Mullens, who appeared to me a formalist, and I never could respect forms for their own sakes, but only as means to an end.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EARL OF BUCHAN. — HIS LORDSHIP'S COMMAND OVER ALL ARTS AND SCIENCES. — HIS RESTLESS ACTIVITY. — ST. BERNARD'S WELL.—PORTRAIT OF GEORGE BUCHANAN, BY TITIAN. —HIS LORDSHIP'S MODE OF ENTERTAINING HIS GUESTS AT BREAKFAST.—MR. ARTHUR CLIFFORD.—MR. GEORGE DYER.—BREAKFAST PARTY OF APOLLO AND THE MUSES. — LORD BUCHAN'S MIDNIGHT CONVERSATION WITH THE LAIRD OF SKENE.—THE LORD ADVOCATE, RUTHERFURD.

During the last two chapters I have harped more than enough on one string (to which, no doubt, I shall recur), namely, the literary character in one particular phasis, together with my own especial desire for quiet and retirement, also for the advice of a competent Mentor in following out consecutively one favourite track of study. These identical feelings and aims have accompanied me through life; and though there have been intervals when I ventured to indulge the belief that I moved on firm ground, it crumbled invariably beneath my steps; the tranquillity was only that of a dream; trains of thought were irretrievably broken; books and papers dispersed; and I found

myself drifting again on the dark ocean-waves of chance and change.

I have been advised to notice whatever remarkable characters fell in my way, no matter whether they were or were not such as the world in its wisdom held in much regard. At this moment, in order to break the yarn of egotism and for the sake of entire contrast, I shall notice one of my earliest literary acquaintances, whose attentions to me were continued for the remainder of his life; though, when he used to enter my room in the mornings, before seven o'clock, and indulge in long admonition to an *élève* half asleep, I was at no pains to disguise my impatience.

The Earl of Buchan recked not a rush about habits of quiet and retirement as being necessary for consecutive application, seeing that his Lordship never willingly sat still for even ten minutes together; and a preference for this or that pursuit was out of the question in the case of a man who, according to his own conviction, knew everything without exception, had all the arts and sciences, the exact as well as the metaphysical, under his control, and could leap from one to another with admirable alacrity.

No one in his senses would have *sought after* Lord Buchan. My acquaintance with him arose from accidental circumstances. His Lordship was

frequently at the house of my uncle-in-law, Dr. Tytler, still more frequently with Dr. Anderson, of Heriot's Green, and in after years, we used to meet almost daily, *chez* the late Sir Brooke Boothby. In another place (namely, "Humours of the North") I have tried to defend Lord Buchan's character. I have insisted that he himself believed all his own marvellous stories, and confided in his own infallibility. If so, surely he was among the most remarkable and the happiest of all eccentric beings; and I am persuaded that my hypothesis was correct, for, without it, I do not see the possibility of accounting for his having wandered so far from the paths of common sense as he sometimes did. I allude here to one instance in particular; but as it relates to affairs of private life, let it rest in oblivion.

At this date (1806) his lordship's brother Henry was Lord Advocate; but strange to say, I cannot at present remember whether it was at the same period or afterwards, that his youngest brother became Lord Chancellor. Both had by nature the same volatility of spirit and versatility of talent which distinguished Lord Buchan. But they were sobered down by the iron bonds of necessity, being thereby chained for the most part to *one* pursuit, upon which they knew that existence and reputation depended. His lordship, who perhaps had

more talent than either, would, I doubt not, have acquitted himself admirably well, if he had continued to be Lord Cardross only, and had gone abroad as a diplomatist, to which office he was appointed by King George III. But succeeding to the family estates, which were then encumbered, he wisely resolved on coming home to nurse them, which he did, till his income thence derived, from being very limited, became amply sufficient for his lordship's expenditure.

Most truly Lord Buchan was not one of those who, in the character of land-owner, would thereby subside into a state of *cabbageism*, nor did he ever trouble himself one moment about the conventions of society. Unluckily, however, he mistook his own buoyant spirits and quickness of superficial apprehension for the heaven-born inspirations of original genius. He would not follow out any one favourite pursuit to the exclusion of others—this would have been servile, and, in his case, needless. Turning over any volume, however abstruse, he could at all events comprehend the author's drift, and if so, this was quite enough. He felt the most thorough confidence that he could, *ad libitum*, repeat all the author's experiments or calculations and undergo all his labours. But the day for such labour was of course deferred. After ten minutes' work, his lordship

would fling aside the book and trot away, perhaps through the wild snow-drift of a winter's day, in order to find out some hapless *élève* to whom he might deliver an oration on recondite science, earnestly advising that the said *élève* would follow out the study under his instructions.

To reckon up Lord Buchan's vagaries would require an entire volume, at least as bulky as Gassendi's life of the fantastic Peiresk, which was one of his lordship's favourite pocket companions. According to his own account, he was the oldest man then living, but as to health, strength, spirits, flexibility, and grasp of intellect, he was also the youngest. He had read books and become acquainted with eminent men long before the date of his own birth! Among the literary distinctions of which he boasted was that of holding a diploma as *Medicinæ Doctor*, whereby he was privileged to take his part in consultations and to prescribe for all who chose to confide in him. But his advice was usually given unasked, and I fancy was not much respected. Of his own health he took especial care, always retiring to rest at eleven or twelve and rising at six. Before seven, even in dark winter mornings, he set out on his perambulations, never, by any chance, omitting a visit to St. Bernard's Well, a mineral spring over which Lord Gardenstone had erected a temple, the water

being remarkable for having an odious twang of hydrogen gas, and being nevertheless without any medical virtues whatsoever. Here his lordship lectured to all who would listen to him, on the duty of early rising, and on the brilliant light diffusible by his own example in this and other respects. In process of time, he took some offence at the keeper of the temple, and finding a branch of the same detestable spring a little farther on, he built a shed over it at an expense of three or four pounds, wherein he placed his own bust, under which was hung a copy of verses, his own composition, and written on parchment in his own hand, commencing:—

"Ye beaux and ye belles, ye gay little tits!"

Unluckily, for my readers, I cannot recollect any more of this excellent poem.

Returning from the well he paid visits; and where he could not obtain admittance, left Lord Buchan's compliments, with expressions of sorrow and surprise that Mr. White, or Mr. Black, should indulge the suicidal practice of sleeping away the precious morning hours. After breakfast he wrote letters, or added to his collection of "*anonymous* and fugitive essays, by the Earl of Buchan," to be sent *gradatim* to the grand repertory entitled, "Commercium Literarium," in the hands of

Dr. Anderson, of Heriot's Green, by whom, or by whose executors, the treasures would one day be given to an admiring world. Soon tiring of his desk, he emerged for the business of the day, the high pressure of his occupation being always incessant; for as his lordship conceived that all the artists, literary men, and scientific men of the modern Athens, were under his especial care and patronage, it was no slight exertion to run through them all every day, and administer the necessary counsels, so that they might acknowledge their duties, and remember who was their Magnus Apollo. Certain doors, it is true, were hermetically sealed against him; but he had enough to do with those which remained open.

I am still persuaded that the earl was, in all his crotchets, quite sincere, though upon the whole he met with a very ungrateful world; partly, I suppose, because his patronage never manifested itself in the shape of pounds, shillings and pence. I doubt much whether he was morally to blame in this respect—I doubt whether there was any room left within his capacious mind for the reflection that whilst an artist had a well-finished picture on his easel, the said artist's family might be threatened by their landlord, and in want of the common necessaries of life. His lordship's notion of self-importance and of self-congratulation were so

largely developed, so *prononcé*, as the French would call it, as to fill up every cranny and corner of his mind; so he "went on his way rejoicing," and would not part with sixpence unless it were to clench some very good bargain, as in the case where he gave three pounds, five shillings, to good old Mrs. Kaye, of the Parliament Close, for an ancient portrait upon pannel, which, after it had been carefully cleaned and varnished, he dubbed George Buchanan, painted at Rome by Titian! In due time it was placed into a gorgeous frame, with a suitable inscription underneath, and strange visitors were instructed to look on it with becoming wonder and veneration. I have not the slightest doubt that Lord Buchan believed his own legend about this picture; indeed, for my own part, had I not known the whole truth from Mrs. Kaye, I might have been half inclined to believe in it also.

My late brother-in-law, Mr. Arthur Clifford, never forgot his first visit to Lord Buchan. He was invited to breakfast at nine o'clock on a cold March morning, to meet Mr. George Dyer. On their arrival the earl, to their amazement, proposed to change the scene from his own house to that of Mr. Cunningham in George Street, in order, as he said, that they might breakfast in company with Burns; in plainer terms, in presence of the poet's bust which existed there. Appre-

hending, however, that there might be a scarcity of eggs, he placed two in his own pocket before starting. Arrived at Mr. Cunningham's, his lordship's thundering knock brought to the door a slipshod Peggy, who, in her alarm and amazement, led the guests into the parlour; where, if not exactly,—

> "Beakers drained and seats o'erthrown
> Show'd in what sport the night had flown,"

yet, in plain prose, Burns's black marble bowl still stood on the supper-table, and there were other indications that a jovial party had revelled there the preceding night. Peggy left them, and soon re-appeared with her master's compliments, and assurances of regret that, "no' being vera weel, he could not have the pleasure of seeing the gentlemen at that early hour."—"Harkee, child!" said his lordship, in a tone of great bitterness, "go back to your master with my compliments,—Lord Buchan's compliments, you understand;—or stay, take him this card, and say, Lord Buchan admonishes him for the last time; and that if he persists in lying a-bed at nine o'clock, instead of being up before six, he will go to the devil!"

This matter being disposed of, his lordship solemnly pointed to Burns's bust on the sideboard. He took from its brows a wreath of holly, which with the air of a high priest he first placed on Mr.

Clifford's head, then on Mr. Dyer's, after which it was restored to its former place.

"Gentlemen," said his lordship, "although you are both poets, I hope you both condescend to keep a diary in plain prose; I have done so for fifty years and more. You will record this as the most extraordinary and memorable day of your lives. You have been crowned with the wreath that shades the features of the immortal Burns; and you have received this honour at the hands of the Earl of Buchan!"

Whether his lordship thought that the impression of an incident so solemn ought to remain undisturbed, or he had misgivings that the morning's performance had turned out a failure, I cannot tell, but, *en route* homewards, he said nothing. The trio marched through a drizzling rain in profound silence, till having come close to his own door, Lord Buchan turned round suddenly and stood stock still. "Mr. Clifford," said he, "the man who does not honour me in his heart for all that I have done—*is a fool!!*"

This entirely demolished my brother-in-law's gravity, and greatly discomposed that of Mr. Dyer. It was their first visit, and they had not come prepared for any such *ultra* demonstration as this. Thereafter, Mr. Clifford became so much accustomed to Lord Buchan's vagaries, that he won-

dered at nothing, and did not expect any thing better.

Another of his lordship's breakfast parties drew on him the ridicule of all the town. It was even commemorated in the "Town Eclogue," a clever satire by the Rev. G. H. Drummond, by publishing which the author made for himself such inveterate and vindictive enemies, that he was forced to abscond. Lord Buchan selected nine young ladies of rank, who were to personate the Nine Muses, whilst he himself received them as "Glorious Apollo."

> "Steams of weak tea, like curling incense spread,
> Wreath'd round the president's belaurelled head."

The young ladies and their illustrious host were in fancy dresses, but unluckily the classic models had in one instance been too closely observed, for when Cupid entered with the tea-kettle, he had no dress whatsoever. Hereupon the nine young ladies were so much amazed that they all started up, and, tittering or screeching, ran out of the room. For this trifling blunder Apollo cared not a rush. It detracted not one iota from his own dignity in *his own* estimation. The classical scene had taken place and therewith he was content. If the whole world chose to crack its sides with laughter at him, he could remain tranquil and un-

moved. On one point, however, he was rather nettled. He had intended that the scene should be repeated, in order that the whole might be perpetuated on canvas by an eminent historical painter (I believe by the unfortunate Grahame). But the artist observed, that there would be a good deal of work upon ten portraits (not to speak of Cupid), and that having painted already more than enough for the sake of mere fame, he thought it was full time to look for some profit. This had not exactly entered into his lordship's calculations, so the projected *tableau* must needs be abandoned.

During my long acquaintance with Lord Buchan, no incident seemed to me more ridiculous than one which, on repetition, will, I am afraid, appear very insipid. We had dined at Lord Newton's, where our worthy host, though he strongly recommended wine by example and precept, yet allowed his guests to use their own discretion as to the proper *quantum*. The good laird of Skene had, *more suo*, imbibed as much claret as to render him very comfortable, and, as usual at such times, though he had lost the faculty of articulation in ordinary discourse, he still could manage to get through a short comic song with perfect precision. I left the house about midnight, along with Lord Buchan and the laird, the latter taking my arm, for he chose on that occasion to walk home, as his

lordship always did. During our promenade, the latter held forth unceasingly on the details of some grand literary or scientific plan, on which he was then engaged, and upon which his self-complacency and inward congratulations were enormous. He stopped occasionally and caught the laird's button, to make sure of due attention, but he received not one word in rejoinder. At length we came to a hotel in St. Andrew's-square, where Skene resided, and where, perceiving too plainly that his lordship would not give over till something like a reply was elicited, he availed himself of a momentary pause to respond as follows :—

" Come fussel, fussel auld wife,
And ye's get a hen ;—
Come fussel, fussel auld wife,
And ye's get a hen !
Oh the never a bit, quo' the auld wife,
Tho' ye wad gi'e me ten !"

This was most unexpected ! But our friend could not articulate, and in the spirit of good humour he had made this best answer within his power ! His lordship's anger, however, would have been great, if his contempt and pity had not been still greater. He made a speech, indicating that henceforth he would look upon the laird of Skene as no better than a shadow ; and with these parting words, trotted indignantly away.

I must not dwell too long on the character of Lord Buchan, otherwise my whole allotment of canvas might be filled with sketches of this dignitary alone. Some readers will think I have already said too much of him; others who remember the confidence wherewith his lordship honoured me, will perhaps opine that I have said too little, and that in a rather uncharitable spirit. Indeed I cannot lay down my pen without repeating, that his lordship's talents, if, like his brothers, he had been sobered down by professional duty, would have led him on to self-acquired rank, more estimable than that conferred merely by a hereditary coronet. He had a tenacious memory, had seen a great deal of the old world, had read much, though superficially, and at dinner parties, either at his own house or elsewhere, appeared as a jovial, witty, and humorous companion. On such occasions, he dropped the long yarns of egotism which he had been twining all the morning; he took no undue share of the conversation, but contributed his *quota* to the mirth and *abandon* of the hour. I have dined repeatedly at his own house with small parties, as his lordship not unfrequently did at mine. It was during the morning hours, when he neither would apply steadily himself nor allow others to do so, that I winced under his visitations. Sir Brooke Boothby suffered by them

the least, for, as he always rose before five o'clock, he had got through half a day's work in advance before his lordship usually made his appearance.

I am warned that if my memoirs progressed only by the same pace at which I have moved hitherto, my life might end before the manuscript was done; and I must consequently wind up my notices of 1806. I feel inclined to add, however, that among my college companions at that date, there was one (and one only) who seems to me deserving of special remembrance—I mean the present Lord Advocate Rutherfurd. With the liveliest aptitude for every department of literary pursuits, for example, with a sincere love of poetry, on which we often held long discussions, he yet showed from early days the most sagacious appreciation of the world into which he was thrown. He perceived plainly enough that he must be contented with our said world as it was, or leave it altogether. Utilitarianism was its only religion; observance of conventional forms and prejudices, however absurd, was an indispensable passport to its favour. Accordingly, he submitted to the dull formal tasks devolved on him without a murmur. We then happened to attend the same classes, wherein Rutherfurd became distinguished beyond all competitors. By dint of patience he had the contents of every class-book at his fingers'

ends. It mattered not a rush upon what chapter he was examined. He opened his book, translated and commented as if he had the whole already by heart. Nothing seemed to cost him any effort. I believe his equanimity of temper and resolute perseverance, would have conquered any obstacles whatsoever that could have been thrown in his way. These qualities are perhaps not extremely rare, but according to my experience it is very rare to find such combined with great quickness of apprehension. I had rationality enough to predict that Mr. Rutherfurd would one day rise to high honours in whatever profession he chose to select, and so it has proved.

Our paths of life have ever since been the most opposite possible; his lordship steadily mounting up hill, and I as constantly retrograding and descending, in a most unequal combat with adverse chances, till I now contemplate the dark, narrow cell at the bottom as my near resting place.

Under the complicated discomforts of "our land," I held on till the month of March, when my health broke down utterly, under an attack of malignant fever, which wound up my course for that college season, and nearly wound it up for life. My kind friend, Dr. Monro, senior, came at the first summons, and during the following week clambered up our long stairs three times every

day. He enjoined me to take obediently the remedies which he prescribed, to be of good courage, and all would soon be well. To the bystanders, however, he intimated that the case was very serious—that it was impossible to say how the crisis would turn out, and on the whole, there was rather more to fear than to hope. Under these impressions he wrote to my relations in the north, who lost not a moment in setting out for Edinburgh, where they arrived early in the morning, after travelling all night. The malady was too severe to last long, and in the beginning of April I bade adieu for ever to "our land." Right glad and thankful I was to meet the first green leaves of spring in scenes the most different possible from those which I had left. From that date I took up, naturally enough, a detestation of towns and college classes, and long stairs and conventional regulations of all sorts. I would have given up life altogether rather than have endured *soi-disant* life, if it must be made up of such vile realities as those which I had encountered during the preceding six months.

CHAPTER XVII.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE AUTHOR'S UNCLE, JOHN GILLIES, LL.D., F.R.S.—OUR VARIOUS READINGS AND RAMBLES TOGETHER.—HIS KIND AND PRUDENT COUNSELS.—MY RETURN TO EDINBURGH.—PROFESSOR DUGALD STEWART.—HIS LOVE OF RETIREMENT AND UNREMITTING APPLICATION.—A FAMILY DINNER AT HIS HOUSE IN THE CANONGATE.

THE autumn of that year (1807), contrasted with the unhappy spring, and made a pleasant vicissitude in my experiences.

My late uncle, Dr. John Gillies, had just then published his "History of the World from the reign of Alexander to that of Augustus," a work which had been the tranquil labour of many years, and on the completion of which he very eagerly sought for an interval of entire relaxation in the country. Accordingly, he spent most of his time with us from the end of August till the month of November.

Doctor Gillies's leading principle in composition (like that of Southey) was to allow his long works to grow up imperceptibly under his hands. Luckily

for his own health and comfort, he needed not to hurry them, but could afford to wait the chances. One of his favourite maxims was that "literature is the best of amusements, but the worst of professions;" an excellent aphorism, but which was not exactly borne out as applicable to his own case, seeing that his historical labours, on being handed over to their publisher, produced a large amount in hard cash—far more, I suspect, than the entire literary force of Hume, Robertson, Gibbon, Gillies, and Mitford, all united together, would obtain now-a-days for any history of the Ancient World!

From earliest years Dr. Gillies's own life had afforded a remarkable example of unremitting stedfast perseverance in the paths of worldly prudence; and I doubt if it ever fell to the lot of any other literary man to fulfil as he did, the functions of Greek Professor (or of any other professor) at the age of sixteen. Dr. Moore, of Glasgow, was disabled by ill-health, and my late uncle, at the early age above-mentioned, was appointed to preside over the class as his *locum-tenens*. I presume he might eventually have obtained the professorship if it had been an object of ambition to him. But wishing to see the world, he accepted an invitation to become travelling companion and instructor to the honourable Henry Hope, with whom,

accordingly he went abroad, and to whose memory he inscribed his first publication.

This was the foundation of his prosperity. His first pupil died untimely, and deeply lamented; but he travelled again with other members of the Hopetoun family, who treated him as a friend and adviser on almost all occasions, and reposed in him the utmost confidence. Returning from his various tours on the Continent, he established himself in London, where his first remarkable work was the "History of Ancient Greece," in four volumes, large 8vo. Before it was completed, the death of Dr. Robertson left a vacancy in the office of "Historiographer Royal for Scotland," and it was immediately proffered to him. From that moment onwards, he could devote himself to literature, undisturbed by any of those cares and anxieties which have too often weighed on authors with a crushing load. To labour hard, but to be reckless of immediate remuneration is indeed a pleasant life, for self-imposed tasks have more of sweet than bitter. But after a long morning's work, to lay down the pen wearily, then to feel that immediate poverty enjoins a new task, namely, that of providing by desperate expedients for the wants of a family in the passing hour, *hic labor, hoc opus est.* Poverty engenders poverty, and every expedient that succeeds at the present moment renders

the next more difficult and doubtful, till at length hope becomes extinct, and life gradually decays.

From such cares, as I have said, Dr. Gillies was completely free. Like Lord Buchan, perhaps he had scarcely room enough in his mind to admit the conception that such miserable cases existed, or if so, he would at once have assigned as their *only* cause, the neglect of the dictates of Prudence, a virtue for whom I never had much esteem in early days, simply because I detected her oftentimes in very bad company!

From pecuniary cares, as I have said, Dr. Gillies was completely free. He married after his preferment, but had no family, and used to make it a boast that if he possessed only twenty pounds per annum, he could live within that amount. Whether this bold hypothesis could have been realized I pretend not to say; at all events, it never was put to the proof. During many years that I knew him, his income was not less than one thousand pounds per annum, and that two people might live within this moderate revenue and thereby grow every year richer, is not much to be wondered at. His visit to us in 1807, was by no means the first; he had been repeatedly in the north, and his letters to me, before and after that period, often filling several sheets of large paper, would suffice for a volume.

Dr. Gillies could not complain that as a scholar I was unwilling to work, and accordingly he applied himself this autumn to correct the defects and errors of an education which, as he said, had hitherto been woefully mismanaged. In order to promote that expansion of intellect and knowledge of the world which I so sadly needed, above all to banish the delusive phantoms of poetry and romance, he proposed the daily study of Cicero's Tusculan questions, into which I entered with good heart, and for which I retain some liking up to the present hour. We had two copies, and sat at opposite sides of a large table. I read aloud and translated every sentence before he meddled with it. He then followed, correcting my errors, which, for the first week were not few, and developing the author's meaning to the utmost extent. I took pleasure in this because it was good practice in the Latin language. In other respects, however, our author's ethical and metaphysical disquisitions were of little avail to me. My instructor wished to transmute them all into what he called practical knowledge or knowledge of the world, which *selon lui* was above all other wisdom. He walked always with prudence, and was a strict conventionalist. On the contrary, I cared not a rush about the world. I wished to move aloof from it altogether, and confine myself

to the track of certain romantic poets who seemed to have had no other confidential companions or guides, but the waving woods, the gleaming lakes, the melodious winds, and the mountains, with their crisp clearness, or wildering clouds.

Yet we agreed well together; there was never a moment's lack of occupation; and whilst I was docile over the Tusculan questions, he repaid me by reading, good humouredly and at my request, authors who till then were scarcely known to him even by name. He could not be induced to praise them, however; they could not be of any use in the world, and he avowed constantly and openly that his leading drift was utility. Very willingly, too, he accompanied me in my long rambles. We had broad rides or carriage drives cut through the woods, extending for miles; these were not cleared of the roots yet, but I insisted on his traversing them all, and stopping at every point from which my friend, Mr. White, had caught a particularly fine glimpse of the river, or the distant hills. Occasionally, too, we made excursions to the Grampian mountains, the dreary dark region of clouds and storms, in order that Dr. Gillies might have the pleasure of repeating on the veritable ground, Gibbon's melodious amplification of Tacitus's brief expressions respecting these barriers:—"Sed nulla jam ultra gens: nihil nisi fluctus et saxa."

Vita Agric. 30. These few words remain on my memory, but Gibbon's complexive sentence is obliterated.

In such amusements, with three or four hours daily reading and constant critical discussions, the autumn passed pleasantly away. It is very needless to say, that I had not the slightest wish to return to Edinburgh ;—I had no attractions thereto, unless it had been to re-visit my friend, Dr. Black, or Dr. Tytler, who continued to struggle with complicated difficulties on his half-pay income of 80*l.* a-year. Indeed I had suspicions that on account of my father's declining health, I ought not to leave home ; however, it was decreed that I should return to town, and should this time take apartments for myself alone. I would willingly have accepted an offer made by my Oxford friend, the Rev. Mr. Mullens, and joined forces with him, as we agreed well on some points, but the plan was overruled. I would have done this the rather because Mr. Mullens was then struggling with disappointments, and suffered by the *res angustæ*. I never could, at any period of my life, discover why talents, industry, and learning, should be less estimable and less worthy of respect when accompanied by poverty, than when assisted by an independent income. Up to the present hour, after forty years' experience and reflection

thereon, I am not much better able to answer the question than I was in 1806. But I am quite aware that "the world" understands it thoroughly; and that I have not been entirely negligent in trying to obtain from the said world, information on this and other points, will, perhaps, appear before these Memoirs are closed.

Our winter that year began very early; we had hard frost and snow-drifts in the beginning of November, which Sir W. Scott attentively commemorated in one of his prefatory epistles to the cantos of "Marmion." In no enviable mood of mind, and with no cheering presentiments, I quitted my forest haunts, had a long parting conversation with my favourite dog, and in due time took up my solitary position at Edinburgh, having two parlours on a *rez du chaussée* of the veritable new town. Ostensibly my purpose was to attend the lectures of Professors Stewart, Playfair, and Finlayson.

In my reader's estimation I have said, perhaps, more than enough in favour of a country life, and the advantages it affords for consistent unremitting application. I think no one that I have ever known cherished this preference more earnestly, I would almost say religiously, than Dugald Stewart. Consistently with his public duties, of course he could not live out of town, but he did

the next best thing, which was to secure as much as possible of tranquillity and seclusion within it. There was, and perhaps is, an old mansion called Whitefoord House, in the regions of the Canongate, which was so commodious that it could conveniently be divided into two family residences, each complete in itself: one was the abode of Lord Bannatyne, the other of Dugald Stewart. It stood completely retired from the noise of the street, on a large ground, more than an acre, I think, shut in by walls and gateways. Within this enclosure there were some tall old trees, upon which the rooks had begun to build, greatly to the satisfaction of Mr. Stewart, who would by no means allow them to be molested: indeed he used to boast that with the help of their voices during the early spring, he could forget the neighbourhood of the odious Canongate altogether, and feel as if Whitefoord House were not within a hundred miles of any town. His library was to the rear, and its windows looked to the grey rocks of the Calton Hill. I could imagine that our philosopher's trains of thought had become as much connected with them as Imanuel Kant's were with the memorable church tower at Königsberg.

During these records, I have often been reminded of Lavater's remark, that the man who has *no* enemies is for that very reason good for nothing.

In 1807, Dugald Stewart's reputation stood so high, and was so universally acknowledged, that his influence alone was sufficient to render the new town of Edinburgh a crowded place. Students of all ranks and from all countries in Europe flocked thither to attend the University, which generally maintained a good repute, but where Stewart and Playfair were the great stars of attraction, the former being the *facile princeps* as to popularity. His class-room was usually so crowded that without going before the hour it was not possible to find a seat; and so desirous were noble families to obtain his direct advice and guidance for youth, that it was said he had refused the sum of 2000*l.*, as annual pension, for one pupil, pleading that his own literary engagements and uncertain health, did not allow him to undertake the responsibility of such an arrangement.

Admired and sought after as he thus was, he could not escape the evil tongues, if not of downright enemies, at least of detractors. I have heard sneers aimed at him (as formerly at Beattie), for his love of quiet and retirement, and care of his own health; and for his unalterable politeness and amenity of manners, I have heard him characterised as "*too much of the courtier.*" Truly I never could, at any period of my life, find much trouble in discriminating betwixt the *courtliness*

(in plainer language "humbug") of the courtier, and the courtesy (that is to say, kindness) of a sincere friend. In Dugald Stewart's demeanour, or expressions, I never could detect aught of the "pride that apes humility," far less of deception. His manners were unaffected; and according to the dictates of his own good heart, he showed invariably, courtesy and kindness, but certainly not courtliness or *pretension.*

If Dugald Stewart had accepted the invitations that crowded on him, he would, of course, have lived always in society; but it was not without hesitation and reluctance that he would now and then assist at a select dinner party, or make his appearance for a single hour at a "rout." He tried as far as possible to live like a retired country gentleman, giving his whole time to study. In truth, he had need of all his time, considering that with indefatigable patience he would sometimes mould and re-mould the same sentence fifty times over!—No poet was ever more fastidious about the melody and clearness of a Spenserian stanza than Professor Stewart was respecting the perfectibility of a page of metaphysics. It is, indeed, not improbable, that he treated the matter more like a poet than as a sturdy uncompromising reasoner; and yet I persuade myself that, setting prejudices aside, he would willingly have rendered justice to

his contemporary, the unequalled sage of Königsberg, if it had been within his power *fairly* to study that author. But Borne's Latin translation was inadequate, indeed useless for the purpose; and, as I have said before, the German language and literature remained among us inaccessible and unknown. It might be most correctly said of Dugald Stewart: "*Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit.*" He improved on the works of all preceding writers to whom he had access; leaving, however, the study of metaphysics as far remote from the "*sure* march of a science," as it was when he began;—consequently his *élève* and *chosen* successor, Dr. Thomas Browne, did not scruple, but found himself conscientiously called on to differ most widely and on many points from his venerable Mentor. It is almost needless to add that Dr. Browne, popular as his lectures have been, did not succeed better than his predecessors had done in his attempts at reconciling and setting at rest the *antinomies* of metaphysical science.

It is natural that I should linger over the remembrance of Dugald Stewart as a friend from whom I met with kind attentions during a series of years, and from whom, also, I received many interesting letters (which are lost to me now, having been left, with a great mass of private papers, at Edinburgh, in 1827). He was indeed cour-

teous to all his pupils, but possibly enough, my case may have appeared to him in the light of a psychological curiosity; a pitiful case enough, but of a species which he had not met with before, and so it engaged his attention!

I have said that the tone of these records was not intended to rise above that of the most ordinary table-talk, and I may, therefore, be excused for adding a few words respecting my first visit to dinner at Whitefoord House, in a dark evening of December, 1807. I remember how strangers were led, I might almost say compelled, from the first moment to feel at home there, so cordial, so unpretending, and so perfectly *naïf* was the reception. I remember the drawing-room lighted only, but quite sufficiently by a blazing fire, for the professor had enough of work before dinner time, and was then willing to repose himself over the most common-place chit-chat. The impressions derived from this far-famed author's fire-side were materially deepened by, or I should say in great measure depended on, the demeanour and conversation of Mrs. Stewart, whose character was, to my notions, quite as original as that of her sister, the Countess Purgstall, respecting whom Capt. Basil Hall has left memoranda so entertaining. Her manner (that of Mrs. Dugald Stewart, I mean) was at all times best indicated by the Scotch word "couthie;" and

there was a remarkable contrast betwixt the low, quiet, equable tones of her voice, and the enthusiastic, poetical, romantic sentiments which she so frequently expressed.

That evening, the guests, besides myself, were only good Mr. Jardine, a most excellent teacher of mathematics, and two college students, one of them a foreigner, who had brought special letters of introduction. I remember no more of the conversation than certain notices of Thomas Campbell, received from Mrs. Stewart, to which I listened with eager attention. The table-talk was for recreation only; there was not even an approach to learned discussion. The prevalent impression left on the mind of a visitor at Whitefoord House was that of the domestic happiness, the unaffected cheerfulness and perfect unanimity which existed among its inmates; a moral lesson perhaps more estimable than could have been derived from all the metaphysical volumes which had then appeared in Scotland.

In 1810 or 1811, that happiness was fearfully clouded. So heartfelt was Mr. Stewart's attachment to home, that even the slightest change within its wonted circle would have been enough to derange his health and spirits. How deeply, then, he must have deplored the death of a beloved son it is not difficult to guess. Almost immediately

after that event, he expressed his wish to withdraw entirely from public life. At the intercession of his friends, he did, however, resume his lectures; I remember well his first appearance for that purpose. Not only was the class-room overcrowded in every part, but many were unable even to cross the threshold. On that occasion the Earl of Buchan must needs make a public demonstration of his respect, taking his place close to the professor, who, with his characteristic courtesy, handed him his own chair to rest on. But though his return was cheered by friends, who, in calibre of mind and in influence were very different from the noble lord, Dugald Stewart continued to feel weary of our so-called world, and incessantly wished to pass the remainder of his days secluded from all but the "eye of Nature." In 1812, therefore, pleading ill-health, he gladly availed himself of an offer made by the Duke of Hamilton, and retired to Kinniel House (one of the Duke's unoccupied residences), on the banks of the Forth, near Queensferry, where, by degrees, he resumed with energy his literary employments. Hence were dated the best letters that I received from him, and hither I was repeatedly invited, not merely to dinner, but to spend some days; but my habits then were isolated, and I did not accept of any invitations. After the year 1811, except once at

Langley-park, near Montrose, we never met. For the sincerity of his friendships; for his humane, indulgent, and kind disposition; for his love of literature and literary labour, wholly irrespective of the utilitarian principle of distinctions and rewards; lastly, for the unrivalled lucidity and harmony of style which distinguish his own productions, the memory of Dugald Stewart is doubtless still cherished by many who are far better able to bear adequate testimony to his worth than I am.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PROFESSOR PLAYFAIR.—HIS CONVIVIAL HABITS.—NOTIONS ABOUT GAS-LIGHT.— RECEPTION OF THOSE NOTIONS BY THE WISEST OF OUR MODERN ATHENIANS.—THE DUCHESS OF GORDON.—LORD JEFFREY.

With Professor Playfair I had comparatively but little acquaintance, though we met numberless times in the convivial circles of Edinburgh. In his habits of life he differed remarkably from his colleague, Dugald Stewart. He went into society without reluctance, for it seemed as if his tone of nerves and quiet good humour were so equable and perfectly imperturbable, that nothing discomposed him or "put him out of his way." He was not particularly eloquent; he had rather a dry reserved manner, which, but for his good-natured expression of countenance might have been misinterpreted into the cold or sarcastic, than which nothing was more alien from his disposition. On one point, namely fastidiousness of literary taste, and unwearied correction of their own productions, I believe the two luminaries quite harmonized; only Mr. Playfair's pursuit of the exact sciences

did not require such habits of solitude and abstraction as are usually coveted by the metaphysician.

Among convivial meetings I never forget one which occurred during this winter of 1807, and at which Mr. Playfair acted a notable part. On that occasion, as it often happened, there was a select circle made up from "all the talents," a pet phrase in those days for designating the *genus* of Edinburgh Whigs. There were present my Lord Lauderdale, Lord Newton, Mr. Dugald Stewart, Mr. Jeffrey, Sir J. Gibson Craig, Mr. Malcolm Laing, Mr. John Clerk (Lord Eldin), Mr. George Cranstoun (Lord Corehouse), and others whom at this moment I forget. The best joke, the "high jinks" of the evening, after Lord Newton, according to established custom, had been tormented by an unreasonable number of most execrable puns, consisted in "trotting," that is, bantering Professor Playfair upon a remark which he made by the merest chance, and to which he himself at the moment attached no importance whatsoever. The remark was only this, that in his opinion "it might be quite practicable to illuminate the whole of Edinburgh, or any other large town, with artificial light by means of inflammable air alone, so as to supersede the use of lamps and candles altogether." The words riveted my attention, for, as

the reader already knows, I despised beaten paths, forgetting that such are unavoidable at commencement, and was always on the out-look, in a dreamy "wool-gathering" manner, for somewhat adventurous and new.

Now the listening conclave (myself of course excepted) was made up of the very wisest men at Edinburgh, and yet, setting quite aside the jocular humour of the moment, supposing moreover that the remark had been made at nine in the morning over coffee and rolls, rather than at nine P. M. over claret and caviare, I feel very sure no force of eloquence would have induced them to believe that the professor's plan was any better than a dream, far less that what he indicated as possible, would in four or five years later be carried into practice throughout London!

All the talents then present set upon him one after another with their objections and difficulties, seeming to regard his suggestion as a pleasant inspiration derived from the Château Margout, rather than a scientific proposition. The trait which I thought the most notable, and which therefore remained fixed among my recollections, was the unalterable placidity and immoveable stedfastness with which Mr. Playfair maintained his ground against all of them.

My Lord Lauderdale, in his wisdom, struck the

key-note, at the same time tipping the wink to his host.

"Rather a bold as well as novel experiment, professor, eh!" said his lordship.

"Experiments usually point at novelty," responded the professor; "otherwise they can scarcely deserve to be so called."

"When do you think of making the trial?" persisted his lordship.

"That 'll no' be till the deevil gangs blind, I 'm thinking," interposed the ultra-sagacious Mr. John Clerk.

"Pardon me; the experiment has already been tried on a small scale," said Mr. Playfair.

It would be too great an allotment of space in favour of this "right merry" but obsolete jest, if I detailed all the conversation; suffice it, that every possible objection, whether obvious or far-fetched, was raised in vain. Our host insisted dictatorially, that inflammable air being none of the purest, the pipes for conveying it must become foul and obstructed, to which the professor instantly replied, that pipes admitted of being cleaned: and besides, the gas itself could be submitted to a chemical process of purification. Mr. Dugald Stewart recounted that having once assisted at the inflation of an air-balloon, he had found the odour of the gas quite insupportable, so that he was obliged to

retire; to which Mr. Playfair mildly responded, that there were various methods and various materials for the preparation of inflammable gas, which was not in every case equally noxious; besides that, when in a state of ignition it did not exhale any mephitic odours. Hereto followed grave hints as to the expense necessary for conducting the experiment on a grand scale, and the question how many among the party then present would contribute "to pay the piper," and lay the foundation for a joint stock new light company? On financial matters, however, Sir James Craig's decision was paramount, and he declared that the proposed investment was, in his opinion, ineligible, and for his own part he must be excused for declining it altogether. The professor responded mildly, that he had never contemplated the question of being able to raise sufficient funds, this not being an experiment under his own control; but that the apparatus for conveying gas need not be much more expensive than that already in use for conveying water. The Earl of Lauderdale had the honour of winding up as well as of beginning this comical opposition.

"With all submission," said he, "I believe that air is rather more difficult to manage than water; it is more subtle, and will escape more easily. Professor, can you guarantee us against accidents,

if your pipes should happen to leak, and the whole house should be charged with hydrogen?"

"On such premisses, of course, I could not give any guarantee," replied Mr. Playfair; "very serious accidents might then be apprehended."

"That 's to say, the hoose micht be blawn up, I 'm thinking," said Mr. Clerk.

"Very possibly," responded the professor; "but I don't see much validity in this objection. The premisses for it are not necessary; they are hypothetical and contingent."

"I wad pit up with the licht o' an *oelie crusie*, rather than venture the gauze into my premises," rejoined Mr. Clerk.

The laugh now became general and uproarious against the philosopher, who heard it with an aspect of immutable good humour and stedfast adherence to his purpose, for which ever afterwards I honoured him.

During the winter of 1807-8 we had at Edinburgh a continual series of dinner parties, balls and routs, the season being rendered more than usually gay by the presence of the once far-famed Duchess of Gordon. Yet on her own part, I fear the share of the prevalent gaiety was not much, for by this time her grace's health and spirits had begun to fluctuate, and were by fits at a very low ebb. As often, however, as she did appear, either

at her own reception rooms, or elsewhere, her conversation, looks, and demeanour, the fascinations by which she had so long swayed the world of London (her world, that is to say), were equally attractive as of yore. Indeed, the mere reflection of her former brilliancy, in better words, its waning gleams, would have sufficed for Edinburgh.

Thoroughly did her grace know and appreciate that aforesaid world of London. For many years she had been at once its favourite, and when she pleased, its ruler. By this time it is possible that she had become very thoroughly wearied both of her admirers and subjects. The purposes that she had most cherished were already all worked out and effected, and the subservient beings, with their titles and coronets, who had promoted those purposes, naturally lost interest in her estimation. They were no longer wanted; but her former habits of life could not entirely be broken. Her grace did indeed seek repose at her beautiful cottage of Kinrara; she even wrote from thence that "solitude and books, and the care of her garden and pleasure-grounds were all that remained worth living for;" but she could not permanently take refuge in that rural seclusion.

On every point, as above said, the duchess thoroughly understood our then-existing world. She felt firmly convinced that its pretensions to

tight-laced *morale*, not to speak of religion, were mere humbug, and that upon her striking a certain key-note the social circles would willingly follow lead, fling off the mask, and openly trample on it. Examples of this occurred more or less every day during her life in town, and must have afforded her considerable amusement. Moreover, the world always loved to be merry, and her grace's hearty ringing laugh had 'mesmeric influence, was unequalled, and once heard could not be forgotten. It was so unrestrained, natural, and joyous, that it bade open defiance to all cares and sorrows, nor could such presume to exist within the sphere of its vibrations, but seemingly were banished far away to the unseen, murky habitations of poverty, wherein an angel's visit might possibly be dreamed of, but certainly not that of a duchess.

That our Duchess of Gordon, however, might have followed up the victory, and pursued the aforesaid enemies even into the darkest abodes of the poor, in order to banish them from thence also, and to try to annihilate them utterly, is quite possible, — if only room had been left in her mind for such thoughts! But, unluckily, this could not often occur, and the cares and sorrows, though banished for the passing hour, yielding before the fascinations of the smile, the sparkling of the eyes, the rouged cheek, and the joyous cadences of the

voice, found means to steal back again for herself and others, like pertinacious vampyres, when the lights were obscured, when the spells were wound up, and the motley listening throng were all departed.

Even after forty-two years' interval, I doubt not, there still remain some few who will remember, that her friendships when once formed were very sincere and not easily shaken. Whatsoever might be the purpose which she undertook to promote, were it to rescue the fallen and struggling, to advance the fortunes of a friend already prosperous, to ensure the success of a candidate for county or borough, to raise a new regiment, to obtain employment for a younger brother, or a good marriage for an elder daughter, her grace cared not for difficulties or obstacles, but, at whatever cost of exertion, carried her point. Her influence indeed seemed irresistible.

There are anecdotes enough on record of her quaint, comical sayings and quickness of repartee. But she had remarkable versatility of talents, wrote excellent letters, and kept herself *au courant* of the literature of the day. She had the quickest of apprehensions, seemed to read characters as correctly, as if minds and hearts had been laid open before her in a scroll of written confessions, and having acquired this vantage ground of know-

ledge, was no less dexterous than daring in turning it to account. Like others who have had ample experience in testing the characteristics of our exemplary world, the duchess, no doubt, had discovered long ago that it did not improve upon protracted acquaintance; on the contrary, that the number of her contemporaries, in whom she could venture to repose entire confidence, very constantly decreased. At Edinburgh, in 1807, her grace's presence might cause, and did cause, gaiety in others, whilst for herself alone there was an overbalance of sadness, and this was deepened for an interval during that season, by the untimely death of her son Lord Alexander Gordon, whose life the most eminent men of our famed medical school tried in vain to save.

Among the public characters who were always to be met with at our balls and routs in those days, out of sight and comparison, the most distinguished was Mr. Jeffrey. To every one who appreciated his talents, the wonder was, how he could reconcile his mode of life in this respect with his literary and professional engagements. But that he did so was very certain. He seemed the gayest of the gay. He was invited every where, tried to make his appearance every where, and, on all such occasions his popularity (if possible) increased.

During these records, I have repeatedly pleaded the necessity of retirement and quiet, as indispensably necessary for the well-being and advancement of the literary character. Mr. Jeffrey, however, set this rule utterly at defiance. To all appearance he cared not a rush about habits of consecutive application. No one could guess what portion of *his* day was appropriated to literary tasks, nor indeed could have imagined that he really had any such tasks on hand. In the mornings, from nine till two, he was on parade, and professionally employed at the Parliament House. Thereafter, till dinner-time, weather permitting, he walked out or promenaded on horseback. Never did it happen for a single day during the season, that he had not divers invitations both for dinner and evening parties. Of the former it is needless to say, he could accept only one *per diem;* but it was quite possible during the evening, to migrate from one rout to another; and this he often did, winding up, of course, where the supper party was the most attractive and congenial.

Dugald Stewart must have his quiet home, his ample store of old folios and quartos, and his view of the Calton Hill rocks, otherwise he was but half a man! Sir Walter Scott also clung to the *idéal* of home; he must have his antiquarian reper-

tories and his library neatly arranged wherein he could find any volume and consult it at a moment's warning. Never did any foxhunter or wild *roué* trample more disdainfully on all such notions than Mr. Jeffrey ! He had third-rate apartments in a "*land*" situated in Queen-street, where, exclusive of the necessary law books and the very newest publications, his entire library consisted of a few motley tatterdemalion volumes, for all the world likest to a set of worn-out school-books, and such perhaps they really were. Truly there appeared no great charm in that home to render it an object of attachment and affection. Its arrangements were not symmetrical nor indicated much attention to comfort. The looking-glass over the chimney piece remains yet in my remembrance, because within and under its tarnished frame were located a preposterous multitude of visiting cards and notes of invitation, which showered on him from all quarters, "thick as the leaves in Vallambrosa."

From all this and other traits which I might adduce, who could have imagined that the gay young barrister was in truth the most adventurous and successful student in town, the very man of all our Athenian world who was most ready and able to grapple with a difficult question, to torture and twist it by the process of analysis and reasoning,

till gleams of light the most unexpected were thrown upon the subject; and who, when his reader or hearer thought that no more could possibly be done, would start again *de novo*, not merely with unabated but increased vivacity, adding more and more of patient argument and brilliant illustration, till at last a so-styled essay (alias reviewal) came forth, comprising materials that might serve as texts for future volumes.

This was not comprehensible, yet was nevertheless true. *When* did he elaborate his papers! There was only one way of accounting for it—the old suggestion as applied in the case of Chatterton, that he did not sleep, but could betake himself to work with undiminished zeal when the day's work of the world was done. It would be rather too hypothetical to suppose that he possessed a duality of mind, and could persist in arranging silently a critical argument with one, whilst with the other he managed a nonsensical conversation at the supper table. However, there was one leading peculiarity in Jeffrey's character, which perhaps rendered time of some value in his case, that would otherwise have been lost; I mean the grace and alacrity wherewith, if opportunity offered, he could turn ordinary conversation to account. If the most common-place remark were tendered on a subject in itself inter-

esting, he would rapidly reply with an illustration as original as it was unexpected. And if his superficial neighbour luckily ventured to differ from him in opinion, then he would rouse and present the matter in a hundred new lights (if needful) so as to carry his point. And this argument taking its rise, perhaps, from a mere platitude in the course of ordinary table-talk, or during a walk to Corstorphin Hill, might dwell on his remembrance, and if committed afterwards to writing serve for the commencement of a leading article.

From the tone of these *notanda* it might seem as if I had forgotten the egregious faults of the "Edinburgh Review," the arrogant folly of those who believed its dicta infallible; also, the various chapters therein, which, though written as usual with liveliness *ad captandum*, were in other respects inexcusable, the sentiments being coarse and the judgments utterly erroneous. And in one sense it is true that I have nearly forgotten these; they are lost in the background of shadows, and my attention at present is fixed on the character of the work as being the most original that had as yet ever appeared among us. This may seem paradoxical. But in plain truth the conception of a British review which should not only take its rank in the standard literature of the day, but

should live in after years to be referred to with equal pleasure and profit, was so bold and novel that the term original may most justly be applied to it. Up to the year 1802 what pitiful abortions were our so-styled reviews! The object of their authors was to "give an account of the books;" and the notion that upon every occasion there should be a special drift to contend for, an opportunity caught and improved for benefiting the cause of literature, or politics, or morals, or science, by placing the subject in a new light, seemed never once to have entered into the calculations of our self-complacent editors. We had, it is true, our "English Review," our "Monthly Review," our "Critical Review," our "British Critic," and other such trash, of which it is difficult to imagine that the sale could remunerate for the expenses of paper and print, and yet up to the year 1802, the delectable productions above-named were in this department our best! With such charming examples before them, and without any better, did Sidney Smith originate, and Jeffrey with unexampled talents and perseverance uphold and realize, the plan of a critical journal, which should afford a contrast the most determined and *prononcé* to all such precursors, and of which the influence should permanently survive, even in cases where the works that gave rise to its dis-

cussions and arguments became no longer attainable, but had drifted away into oblivion.

The success and the power which the projectors of the "Edinburgh Review" obtained, need no comments of mine. As little need I remark upon the instances in which this power was misapplied and abused; such, for example, as the absurd articles on Wordsworth's poetry, respecting which the most charitable supposition is, that the critic in truth had never fairly studied his author. But such articles are the more unaccountable, seeing that Lord Jeffrey, as a critic of poetry, has himself written one of the most remarkable passages of poetical prose that are on record. It is as follows.

"There is a sort of poetry no doubt as there is a sort of flowers, which can bear the broad sun and the ruffling winds of the world, which thrive under the hands and eyes of indiscriminating multitudes, and please as much in hot and crowded saloons as in their own sheltered repositories; but the finer and the purer sorts blossom only in the shade, and never give out their sweets but to those who seek them in the quiet and seclusion of the scenes which gave them birth. There are torrents and cascades which attract the admiration of tittering parties and of which even the busy must turn aside to catch a transient glance; but the haunted stream steals through a still and solitary landscape, and its

beauties are never revealed but to him who strays in calm contemplation by its course and follows its wanderings with undistracted and unimpatient admiration."*

In the year 1807, the Review was in its glory, and our Athenian world was moved to convulsions of laughter by a chapter on Sir John Sinclair's "Code of Health and Longevity." The editor well knew that room must be allotted in every number for the performances of a Merry Andrew, otherwise its chance for popularity would be sadly diminished. It mattered little, perhaps, on what author this indispensable functionary pounced in order to trot him out for the amusement of an enlightened audience, and, luckily, Sir John's shoulders were quite broad enough to bear the whacks of Mr. Merriman's baton. The baronet happened to be at Edinburgh when the article appeared, and one afternoon called on his cousin, the Duchess of Gordon, when her grace was indulging in the heartiest risibility over the review, which she concealed immediately under the cushion of the sofa.

But to return.—I cling obstinately to my old creed, that habits of retirement and quiet, with ample store of books, are indispensable for the proper conduct of literary pursuits, and I cherish

* "Edinburgh Review," April, 1809.

this feeling the more because in a life of vicissitude my books have been all dispersed and lost, my manuscripts have nearly shared the same fate; and if I can, upon an average, command only one hour *per diem*, for literary employment, I must therewith be contented.

A single exception, such as that afforded by Lord Jeffrey, only proves the rule. And though for some years of his early life he fulfilled the duties of a popular reviewer without retirement, and, to all appearance, without habits of consecutive application, it must be remembered that he acted as a critic only; he was not occupied on any long work, but moved, *per saltum*, from one subject to another. As years rolled on, and long before his promotion to the Bench, his lordship manifested as unequivocally as Charles James Fox, Dugald Stewart, or any other public character had ever done, his appreciation of domestic habits and rural retirement. His bachelor's apartments in Queen-street were, in due time, exchanged for a good house in George-street, thereafter, for a fashionable mansion in Moray-place; moreover, he sought and found his *Tusculum* at the old castle of Craigcrook, under Corstorphin Hill. It is very needless for me to subjoin that the same admirable talents with which his lordship long ago dissected, analyzed, illustrated, and recomposed, the most difficult

arguments for the "Edinburgh Review," have been, and are, most successfully applied to his duties as a judge, in which high station scarcely any one has ever been more deservedly and generally respected.

* * * * *

Since these lines were penned, the grave has closed over the life temporal of this amiable and distinguished man, though his voice yet lives among us, and, as long as our language lasts, cannot die. I allow what I had written to stand without alteration, as I have already done in too many pages of these memoirs, where corrections and *addenda* were more needful than they seem to be on this occasion.

CHAPTER XIX.

SIR JOHN SINCLAIR. — HIS UNEQUALLED PERSEVERANCE. — HIS CONTEMPT FOR DIFFICULTIES.—THE STATISTICAL ACCOUNT OF SCOTLAND. — THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE.— HIS DISREGARD OF SELF-INTEREST. — MRS. SIDDONS AT EDINBURGH. — SIR WALTER SCOTT'S "MARMION."—HIS PECULIAR HABITS OF COMPOSITION, AND TENETS RESPECTING THE LITERARY CHARACTER.

Respecting Sir John Sinclair, to whom I have accidentally alluded, I might properly enough have written a long chapter under the date 1794, seeing that he was frequently in Kincardineshire, and that among land-owners of the North, he had afforded an example altogether unprecedented, and such as has not since been equalled.

As a country gentleman of old family, and heir to a competent fortune, endowed with great vivacity of spirits and aptitude for business, it was nothing remarkable or extraordinary that he should, at an early age, obtain a seat in Parliament. But that, for nearly fifty years, he should, with undaunted perseverance continue to strive for the public benefit, with a weight of complicated

responsibilities, all which he voluntarily and with his eyes open, brought upon himself, is, indeed, somewhat memorable and deserving of record!

Never, surely, was there any landowner, or northern M. P., who did more decidedly than Sir John Sinclair despise and detest the system of *cabbageism*. He would not rest himself nor allow others to do so. Attention to the wishes of his electors, and activity in promoting the interests of his own county, might have seemed enough in the estimation of most people; but, on the contrary, Sir John, during almost half a century, acted as if the weal of all Scotland had been entrusted to his care, and had in great measure depended on his management alone.

As might be expected, the consequences were, that he found quite enough to do, rather more than would have suited the habits and disposition of any of his neighbours, whose principal notions of activity did not carry them much beyond the exertions needed for a good day's sport on the moors; and, perhaps, an uproarious drinking bout afterwards. But Sir John could work at his writing table twelve hours daily for years together, yet retain exuberant health and spirits. Moreover, he constantly travelled from place to place, and appeared every where in order to rouse others to action and engage collaborators. He was ex-

emplary in his attendance, and a very frequent speaker at the House of Commons. He shied at no labours or fatigue, however great, for the accomplishment of his purposes; and, with all this, one could not wonder if he became a little vain, seeing that among the whole of his "order" in Scotland, no one had acted or dreamed of acting such a part as he did.

I have begun this chapter in my usual style of table-talk, but cannot help regretting, particularly in the present instance, that I am obliged to write in haste; for Sir John Sinclair's life and character were truly memorable and extraordinary. In youth he had, no doubt, the usual allurements towards a state of *cabbageism*, and what is if possible worse, to the pretended life, the pitiful affectation of activity and intellect, which are to be met with at the "stove school" of the Parliament House in Edinburgh. He soon broke out of that uncongenial sphere, and accepted a seat in Parliament; not for the sake of tacking M. P. to his name and franking letters, but sincerely with a view to a life of utility and exertion. He spoke frequently in the House, and was well received from his earliest commencement. Broken in spirits by a severe domestic affliction, in the year 1785, instead of sinking into despondency or apathy, he set out on his travels into foreign countries, endea-

vouring in all quarters to obtain such information as would be valuable and novel at home.

Returning after long absence, and resuming his public duties, he continued to be unalterably characterised by one leading *trait*, namely, that in whatever scheme he conceived, the difficulties thrown in his way seemed to him made only to be conquered. He was not for one moment checked in his course by discouragement, by ridicule, by neglect or enmity. Of this the statistical account of Scotland is only one among the numberless instances that might be adduced. Respecting the plan of that work, Sir John claimed for himself no merit of originality, inasmuch as a similar scheme had been aimed at in several countries where it utterly failed. Unquestionably, however, there was originality as well as force and courage in that mind, which determined to try again what had elsewhere proved impossible; and against which, at the outset, a great majority shook their wise heads, allowing that the plan might be very useful, but that it never could be realised. Co-operation and combined force were the principles on which it must hinge, and those will best appreciate the difficulty who have tried to apply such principles in England or Scotland. Where pecuniary interests are concerned, truly numbers may be led to pull together; but where this all power-

ful motive is not roused, a projector will find it difficult enough, when he desires unanimity and cordial support, to form even a trustworthy "college of *three!*"

Nine hundred clergymen of the Scotch Presbyterian Church were to start as authors; men of whom the greater number had hitherto confined their literary labours to the composition of a weekly sermon; and they were to go through their tasks with the perfect knowledge that each performance would be printed; that it might be conned and criticised by all the world, more especially by their own brethren of the church. No wonder was it if Sir John needed all his persuasive powers, energy, and diplomatic tact to carry his point in this instance.

The result was indeed most honourable to the clergy as well as to Sir John, for a great majority did by degrees respond cheerfully to his call. And in regard to those who proved refractory or dilatory, he never for an hour abated his own exertions, but goaded them by letters again and again; at last, when the nonconformists were reduced to a very small number, penning his monitory epistles in strong glaring red ink. Having once embarked in the undertaking, I doubt not the projector, rather than abandon it, would have traversed every remaining parish, made his inquiries ac-

cording to principles of the minutest analysis, and prepared the deficient articles himself. But at length the plan that had been deemed quite impracticable was perfected, and in twenty volumes 8vo., made one of the most entertaining as well as most useful books that had appeared in Scotland. The editorship of this work, the revision of the multifarious manuscripts which accumulated on his hands, and the correction of the press, involved Herculean labour. But the task, in *classical* phrase, was nuts for Sir John. The burden was self-imposed, and he moved under it with cheerfulness and alacrity.

The foundation of the Board of Agriculture was another achievement requiring no little tact and perseverance; nor must his military services be forgotten, Sir John having at different times raised and commanded two fencible regiments, both of which were pre-eminently distinguished. But to comment on his various plans, successful and unsuccessful, would require not a chapter but a volume. And to his great honour be it recorded, that during his long life, the *animus* of self-interest and pecuniary accumulation never for one moment influenced his movements. On the contrary, his private fortune was dilapidated instead of improved by his many undertakings, insomuch that pecuniary embarrassment was occasionally superadded

to the many other difficulties with which he so boldly and perseveringly contended. I feel convinced that he was thoroughly sincere when he said: "It is patronage and not pecuniary emolument which all high-minded men covet. To be enabled to provide for friends; to succour the indigent, and to patronize merit; these are the noble objects which stimulate every man of superior abilities to exert his utmost talents in the British Senate, with the hope of recommending himself to his fellow-men, and of rising perhaps at some period of his life to the rank of a minister."

Of this gay winter at Edinburgh, I have little to record. I did not live as before in a crowded "land." There was but one fellow-lodger under the same roof, namely, Mr. Spencer Stanhope. My attention was devoted to collecting old books and old paintings, and continuing my poetical attempts. The evenings were mostly given to society, as I had an invitation to dinner or a *soirée* for almost every day. I cannot remember any of my bibliographical acquisitions that interested me so much as Gawin Douglas's Virgil, in the original black letter quarto, and one of the earliest editions of Spenser in folio. This last was then my favourite, and no wonder. I had discrimination enough to perceive that, on many points, he stood among immortal authors isolated and

alone, as, during his life temporal, he had done in society. Truly a more remarkable instance in support of my favourite theories respecting the love of retirement could not be found than that afforded by Spenser. Too truly also, this gentle yet energetic spirit found himself "with the world at war."

His talents were not denied; he received even the mockery of a title, namely, that of "Poet Laureate," but our English world, under the sway of our "exemplary, amiable and immaculate" Queen Elizabeth, afforded him no adequate encouragement or reward. He seems to have had *one* friend (whether quite congenial in character is another question), namely, Raleigh, who condescended to visit him in his retirement. But the spirit of the poet was not broken by neglect. In consequence of his temporary employment in Ireland, having at last received from the English government the grant of a castle and wild tract of land on the sea-shore, he could live happily in seclusion, though his means were slender and his fare of the humblest, and in that situation he applied himself to his great work. But Ireland was then, as now, the scene of commotions and outrages. An infuriated mob would not spare the sanctity of domestic peace, and of laborious innocent lives. An armed force had no respect for the

roof-tree of a poor poet, but fell upon him with fire and sword. They burned his castle to ruins; his only daughter perished; he himself escaped back to England only to die; he had lived neglected and in poverty; he was at last thoroughly crushed and heart-broken, seeking only release from that world wherewith his pure spirit never had assimilated. Μακαριοι οἱ πτωχοι τῳ πνευματι. (On what principles of language or of common sense we interpret these words into "blest are the poor in spirit," which, unless a comma be placed after the word poor, implies *in English* the grovelling, or the dastardly, I have never been able to ascertain. I have yet to learn how such a meaning can possibly attach to the said words in Hebrew, Syriac, or any other ancient language. In Greek, at all events, I never could interpret the passage otherwise than as "blest are the poor, (comma,) in spirit," or "blest, in spirit, are the poor." For corroboration of this digressive remark, I may refer to St. Ambrose, "De Officiis," book i. chap. xvi. (*Opera, Paris,* 1836, 8*vo.*) or more specially to the first chapter of Mr. Kenelm Digby's unequalled "Ages of Faith," a work which is now fortunately accessible to the public by a new edition.

With regard to the class for the study of logic, its worthy teacher was that winter disabled by

illness, which soon afterwards proved fatal. But as far as I can remember, this branch of education, in itself most important, because it is the key to all others, was then looked upon as a mere formality. Dr. Finlayson was not distinguished as a lecturer, but in order to become so, he would have required extraordinary powers, seeing that logic continued then to be estimated, not as a science, but as little better than a system of artificial conundrums and trickery, which might, properly enough, be "put down," or laughed at. Respecting it, we had accordingly a set of slang phrases such as "chopping logic," the "*invention* of syllogisms," the "old schoolmen," the "wisdom (*ironicè*) of the schools," and so forth.

I remember, like a dream, that Mrs. Siddons came to Edinburgh that winter,—I think it was in the month of February, and probably it was her last appearance among us. She played all her best parts, but did not stay to repeat any of them. As might be expected, the greatest rush and pressure was to see her unequalled *Lady Macbeth*. I remember meeting in the lobby Mr. Dugald Stewart, who was quite as much puzzled how to find a place as I was, the box to which he had been specially invited, being already over-crammed. I know not what became of him in the crowd, but I clambered to the "slips," and made the most

of my station there. Imagination, it has been said, transcends reality, and sometimes no doubt this is true; but I believe no one ever imagined of Mrs. Siddons that which she did not more than realize. The same might be said of Miss O'Neill, great as was, in other respects, the contrast betwixt them. According to my humble notions, however, the natural and unequalled dignity of Mrs. Siddons was not *wholly* in keeping with the real character of *Macbeth's* atrocious wife. In the demon conceived by the poet, there is a passionate fierceness, an anxiety visible through the disguise of calmness which are not reconcilable with that sustained dignity or solemnity of which Mrs. Siddons could not, upon any occasion, not even in ordinary life, divest herself.

In my estimation, by far the most important event of that winter, was the publication of Sir Walter Scott's "Marmion," in which, with all due respect for the author's powers of invention and narrative, my attention was riveted, not by the story, but by the six preliminary epistles. And so it has been with me through life. In all poems of length, whether epic or didactic, the passages that dwell on my remembrance are exclusively those which record feelings connected with the phenomena of Nature, with woods, mountains, lakes, and rivers, and the variety of the seasons' influence. For ex-

ample, the description of moonlight, which occurs somewhere in the Iliad, supersedes, in my recollection, all the rest of the work. Certainly, among those poets who were, or affected to be, men of the world, there are few, if any, whose works afford more frequent passages than those of Scott, proving how observant the author had been, in solitude, of the scenery around him. Accept one of the very shortest examples :—

> "Like April morning clouds that pass
> *With varying shadow o'er the grass,*
> And imitate on field and furrow
> Life's chequered scene of joy and sorrow."

And this :—

> "It was the dawn of an autumn day;
> The sun was struggling with frost-fog grey,
> That like a silvery crape was spread
> Round Glaramara's distant head,
> And dimly gleamed each painted pane
> In the lordly halls of Triermain."

These passages, brief as they are, present two pictures, the one of an April, the other of an October morning, such as no painter with pencil and palette ever could equal. I cannot refrain here from alluding to one other picture, which occurs in a minor poem, by far the most beautiful, both in sentiment and numbers, which Sir W. Scott ever wrote—I mean the stanzas entitled "Helvellyn,"

the subject of which is a well-known fact, commemorated also by Wordsworth. A dead body, wasted to a skeleton, was discovered at the foot of a precipitous rock, and it was watched there by the deceased's favourite dog, almost equally wasted but yet alive, as if miraculously sustained, in order to exemplify unalterable fidelity, constancy, and affection. The following two lines of this poem are absolutely indelible on my remembrance:—

"How long didst thou think that his silence was slumber?
When the wind waved his garment, how oft didst thou start?"

For intense feeling and sympathy, and for graphic truth, I believe that this brief passage is unrivalled.

To Sir Walter Scott I shall have frequent occasions to allude in the course of these records. He was not only among the earliest, but most persevering of my friends; persevering in spite of my own waywardness, and latterly of the *mauvaises langues* of pretended friends, who did what they could, but without success, to sow discord betwixt us. In the year after his death, I contributed (anonymously as usual) my humble homage to his memory in the shape of "Recollections." The first edition appeared in "Fraser's Magazine." The second, with considerable improvements, was published by Mr. Fraser, in 1837. Availing myself

of my *anonyme*, and being under the necessity of making my work applicable to Sir Walter's whole life, I introduced into the first part certain conversations and occurrences not less true than characteristic, which did not take place until a later period of my own life. The cottage at Lasswade was well known to me, for I have spent many happy hours under its roof when rented by Captain Hamilton. The dog's manner of welcoming his master's guest — the conversations with Lord Kinnedder—the accident suffered by Sir Walter, and his disregard of it — the family dinner — all these were taken from vivid remembrance. Mr. Lockhart appreciated my correctness, and has quoted part of that first section. But as above said, I introduced the passages at an epoch in the story, when, if a visitor to the poet at Lasswade, I must necessarily have attained by this time the age of at least seventy-three. Any farther reference to my former "Recollections of Scott" is at present impossible, for I have no copy left. My last was presented to Lady Stratheden and Campbell during my residence in France, several years ago, and I could not now get another.

Perhaps at no period did Sir Walter feel more buoyant in spirits than whilst inventing and recording the fortunes of "Marmion." It was his second great work, and with the melody of the

"Last Minstrel" still on their minds, the public watched with the most eager expectation for the moment when this unequalled musician would commence again. Wonderful to tell, in this instance, as in almost every other, he began to print his work before it was even half written. I have never heard of this method being adopted by any other author, unless by one very impatient or very needy; whereas, in Sir Walter Scott's case it was a self-imposed difficulty, for which there seemed no assignable reason, except that he "required the spur of the press." Delays arose in the publication of "Marmion," which had been promised for Christmas and was not then ready. Inquiries were made daily at the publisher's; and wherever the author went, he also was liable to be assailed by questions. This gossiping talk and solicitude about a work whilst it was still on the anvil, I believe disgusted him, and contributed afterwards to his plan of secrecy in regard to the authorship of the "Waverley Novels."

He was entreated, as a great favour, to read portions of "Marmion," at the Duchess of Gordon's *soirées*, and on one of these occasions, Mr. William Erskine (Lord Kinnedder) was his representative, and did read a canto. The author was a most inadequate reader of his own compositions. He would recite ballads and poems of others with

great animation and *onction*, but could scarcely recite his own at all; and when he read them, it was in a cold, monotonous manner, as if he were all the while putting his verses to the proof, and questioning about their faults, rather than desirous to make a favourable impression on his audience.

One point respecting "Marmion" was especially gratifying to the author, namely, that by means of it, he could place 1000*l.* at the command of a relation who much required aid, whilst he himself had the salary of two public offices to recline upon. This allusion to pecuniary matters reminds me of a favourite aphorism of Sir Walter Scott's, namely, that the "literary character with all its duties was perfectly reconcilable with the habits of a man of business and man of the world;" thus making into a general rule a *dictum* which the experience of many (and at last his own) imperatively contradicted, and for which his premisses were certainly inadequate. It was quite true that he himself could manage the irksome duties of a Clerk of Session, and those of a County Sheriff, and could also mingle in society, without on that account renouncing his literary pursuits. These facts, drawn from experience, were his premisses, and how inadequate to bear out the complexive conclusion, I need scarcely say.

It is, moreover, most true that he himself had

the disposition and courage to contend with difficulties and to surmount them. He looked the demons of adverse chance in the face so quietly and stedfastly that they recoiled from his glance. And this courage no doubt would have distinguished him had he followed his natural inclinations of entering the army, from which only his lameness and the slowness of promotion withheld him. But if employed as a general officer, or even if in full employment at the Scotch bar, most assuredly he would not have written "Marmion;" for his professional duties in either case would not have allowed him that command of time and attention which poetry requires. And though he did look difficulties in the face, he did so from a quiet and comfortable home, the sanctity of which could not be invaded. How much he appreciated that tranquillity which the literary character requires, might be guessed at from his extreme dislike of controversial squabbles, his wish to avoid notice personally, and allow his works to make their way without a name, his aversion to general society, and divers other symptoms. In truth he cleaved to the *sanctum* of home, as much as Dugald Stewart or any other metaphysician could have done, "Old John" and Peter the coachman being both instructed that at certain times (especially Sundays and Mondays) they were to act the part

of Cerberus against all visitors, excepting two or three, who having the *entrée* would not be put back, and who when admitted would not attempt to stay long.

The sanctity of that home, I mean the house in North Castle Street, was indeed profaned at last, and the blow thus inflicted was not unfelt, though he had Abbotsford for his retreat and stronghold. Some time afterwards there was, moreover, an unexpected enemy, a certain Mr. Abudd of London (no doubt vastly respectable there), for whom he was unprepared. This worthy chose to assume the amiable position of being the only creditor who would not accept the terms Sir Walter had so nobly proffered for the liquidation of debts which in equity and justice were not his own. Mr. Abudd preferred the London practice, and like Shylock would "have his bond," or *contrainte par corps*. The mere apprehension of such an event as a compulsory removal from home, as he has himself recorded, did entirely unhinge and disable him for ten days. Sir Walter could contend nobly with difficulties, and look them in the face, but he never was pitted against the veritable demons that follow in the train of Poverty. If so inclined, he might at any time have laid down his pen and retired on a competent income, instead of which the tasks that

he voluntarily undertook were indeed Herculean, so that he might be said to realize in another phasis his early intention of becoming a soldier. In order to maintain his position without compromise, the latter years of his life were spent in unremitting warfare in which he signally triumphed; but the battle was won at the expense of health and life, in other words, the fatigue and the wounds proved mortal.

CHAPTER XX.

FAMILY AFFLICTION.—TESTS OF CHARACTER.—SOI-DISANT SAINTS. — WISE ADVICE. — THE AUTHOR'S RETURN TO EDINBURGH. —THE SPECULATIVE SOCIETY. —LORD JOHN RUSSELL.— THE EARL OF BUCHAN. — A STRANGE OCCURRENCE RELATING TO HIS LORDSHIP'S POSTHUMOUS PAPERS.

HAVING written nearly a volume without having reviewed more than eighteen years of my life, I am warned that time presses, and that I must be less discursive for the future.

Suddenly, and on a momentary impulse, without advice from any one, I wound up that winter's course at Edinburgh. It was obvious to me, from letters recently received, that my father's illness had become very serious, though he himself made light of the matter. I left town by the mail, in a bitter cold morning of the month of March; reached Arbroath at midnight; and, accompanied by a truly kind and affectionate relation, arrived at home on the afternoon of the next day.

The succeeding four months shall be passed

over almost in silence. For me, these were months of anxiety and sorrow, the impressions of which have been permanent during my whole life. But this is no fitting theme to be dwelt upon by a writer of reminiscences in table-talk style, such as these were intended to be. Towards the close of the month of June, Dr. Monro, senior, who came to visit us, and who had already been most attentive in writing letters of advice, intimated that though hope must never be excluded, there was more to fear than to hope; the usual *formula* in which a physician indicates that his own hopes of rendering effective aid are at an end. The fatal event to which I allude took place on the 26th July, 1808.

Of the intrinsic worth of any character, I think there are few better tests than to put the question *how much* his absence is afterwards felt and deplored. I can scarcely remember, during my long life, that any one has been more sincerely and unanimously regretted than Dr. Thomas Gillies was by all his relations and acquaintances. Dr. Gillies, the Historiographer Royal, who had returned to his usual sphere in London, wrote to me from thence, that the deceased's life "had been a general good to all his connexions." He was in truth of a most generous and kind disposition, the utilitarian and worldly-wise principles never being

uppermost, but always subservient in his *morale*. In truth, he entertained both aversion and contempt for the mysteries of worldly wisdom; he would have the *volto sciolto* by all means, but not the *pensieri stretti*. The maxim of an excessively wise nobleman, to which I here allude, he considered as no better than an indication of low cunning and monkey-like trickery, and he despised it accordingly, as much as he did the aphorism, "a penny saved is a penny got," which in more than one letter addressed to me at Edinburgh he stigmatised as an "infamous adage." Most pertinaciously did he abhor *soi-disant* pious and religious people; he seemed to dislike them the more in proportion as he entertained (which he really did) an inflexible faith in a future state, and in the doctrines of Christianity. To such people as think that religion consists principally in going to church, he might appear extremely irreligious, but, *per contra*, on all occasions where the exercise of Christian charity in every phasis was most needed, he stood at the top of the clergyman's list, so that there arose the queer anomaly of the clergyman's best friend and confidant being exactly that parishioner who never went to hear a sermon.

In some respects I have been a very faithful follower of early lessons. My mistrust and dislike of self-elected saints and church-attending people,

has been very stedfast; and as regards contempt for worldly prudence, caution, and the *pensieri stretti*, I have perhaps carried *that* far beyond the bounds prescribed by common sense. For example, if one knows by experience, that by speaking the truth to this or that individual, exasperation or enmity will be the *only* result, common sense dictates that it is better to hold one's tongue. But I had the propensity to carry out dogmas and dicta *à l'outrance*, as will be seen more fully and in due time.

By an event untimely, and deeply deplored, I was thus placed in a new position, that of being the proprietor of a fair (though no longer large) estate in my own right. This event of course can have no interest for my reader, and I need not dwell on it. It had no immediate interest for me, except that already indicated, namely, that it left on my mind an impression of the deepest gloom. This, in the world's opinion, was rather irrational, but my so-called world was a very narrow one, and there was no good understanding betwixt it and me. Not being of age, I had kind advisers. "Landed property," one of them said, "afforded a very pretty and tasteful way of locking up money; it was in that respect like a safe strong box. But there were other ways of employing capital, which would yield five times as much as land. For example,

40,000*l.* properly embarked, might safely yield 4000*l.* per annum. Besides, a landed proprietor, if young in years, should never think of 'sitting down to plant cabbages.' He should, on the contrary, begin the world as if he had no property whatever; should make choice of his profession, leaving the landed property to take care of itself, so that the rents might accumulate."

If all such remarks had been addressed to me in Hebrew or Arabic, their effect could not have been more futile. The only impression produced was a bad one, namely, a decided conviction that my advisers and I could not understand one another. Their views might have been intelligible enough, but I could not comprehend them. Four years afterwards, opportunity was afforded me to be enlightened on this point, but I blinked it. As Lord Byron afterwards observed, I "knew nothing of life," and, what is worse, was not well disposed to learn.

On other points, too, there was a very decided discrepancy. "Poetry, bibliography, old paintings, and literature in general," I was told, "were all vastly good in their way as mere amusements, but nothing more. Such employments were of no use, never could be turned to good account, and would not make the pot boil." The drift of all this was to me perfectly incomprehensible. Perceiving that

the pot already boiled, and contained some rations to spare, I did not acknowledge the necessity for heaping up more fuel, or making it overflow. In plainer terms, I could be quite as well contented with 1000*l.* per annum as with 4000*l.*, or 40,000*l.* If the question had been raised of a necessity for having 40,000*l.* per annum, in order to relieve the wants of others, I could have understood it at all events; but to motives of individual ambition and personal advantages, I remained impassive. I wished to be left alone with my favourite objects, my trees, dogs, and books. But it would not do; and, in the winter of 1808, I returned to Edinburgh.

I remember vividly the long journey thither, and the dislike I had to it. So usual was it to be stopped on the road for want of post-horses, that I travelled all the way with my own. Three days were required to overtake a journey of only eighty miles, on drawing to the close of which it was then not unusual to be detained three hours or more before it was practicable to get across Queen's-ferry. (My Lord Gardenstone never would venture this perilous voyage, but made a wide *détour*, in order that he might cross the Forth at Stirling bridge.)

Through the succeeding winter I had scarcely one day's health, and consequently lived isolated

and alone, my nearest relation being as willing to avoid the so-called gay society of Edinburgh as I was. My object ostensibly was to qualify for becoming a member of the College of Justice, although the notion of pleading a cause at the bar, or the wish to do so, had scarcely ever entered my mind.

In the month of December I had the honour of being unanimously elected a member of the Speculative Society, perhaps the only literary and debating club which ever maintained its original character unimpaired for more than a century. It is yet more remarkable for the great number of eminent men who have been its members. Moreover, on looking over the records, it seems to me notable for the evidence afforded of innate discrepancies of character, those members who were afterwards eminent as professional men in public life having their names constantly recurring in the debate-book, whilst those who afterwards rose to high literary eminence (Scott, for example) scarcely ever spoke, except by compulsion when it came to their turn to open a debate. The business of the evening always commenced with reading an original (or so-styled original) essay, the demerits of which were afterwards freely discussed. Then came a debate on some question, political, moral, or historical, the regulations of "the House" being strictly

modelled on those of the House of Commons. In the literary department, we did not at that period muster strongly,—as negative evidence whereof, I was once chosen to compose and read the farewell address, an honour which I declined, having been a very irregular and inattentive member for the session. When my turn came for essay-writing, I produced one on the literary character, wherein I pertinaciously argued that the poet had in this life a world of his own, thoroughly different from that of other people; also, that it was his especial duty to recognise this truth, and to maintain his own rights. Truly, this was not very edifying to my hearers, nor comprehensible by them. My doctrines had been suggested by various passages in the "Censura Literaria" of Sir Egerton Brydges, then published monthly, and which I valued infinitely more than the far-famed "Edinburgh Review," or any other periodical.

During my time (not in 1808, but two years later) one of the most lively and facetious debaters in the dingy old hall of "the Speculative," was our present prime minister. I doubt not that Lord John Russell, young as he then was, thought the mock dignity and solemnities of the society rather quizzical. However, he kept up his attendance, and cheerfully took part in its goings-on.

His lordship *possibly* may remember those meetings like shadows or glimpses out of dream-land; and possibly, too, may have wished that he could recall the past and escape from the turmoils of office to the quietude of his drawing-room, well-stored with books, at good old Professor Playfair's, or from the glare of St. Stephen's to the twilight glimmer of the debating-hall aforesaid. I recollect some of those evenings—one in particular—when a hapless member had been appointed to act the part of advocate for Queen Mary; how Lord John did cut him up, and, by affected pity and sly sarcasms, demolished all chance of acquittal for that unhappy princess,—at least within the walls of "the Speculative."

Seeing that the important events of our "time-life" may often be traced back to very trifling causes, the hypothesis is natural and unavoidable that *possibly* Lord John Russell would never have accepted the cares of office, if he had not successfully spoken, as many eminent men had done before him, within the humble arena of this institution. By the bye, I must not leave out one of its remarkable characteristics, namely, that members already risen to eminence and in full employment, held it in such kindly remembrance, that they would reappear on the field, and resume their parts, as if grown young again. Of this

Jeffrey afforded a remarkable instance. I think the most imaginative and effective speech I ever heard from him was made at one of those chance visits to the Speculative Society.

Of that winter, few traces remain on my mind that are worth recording. I laboured assiduously, as usual, and read much, but for want of a Mentor, the result was little better than if the time had been spent in twisting ropes of sand. One of my productions was a long poem in blank verse, consisting, as usual, of mere commendations on a country life, and the varieties of season and landscape. I added, of course, to my collection of old books, and one bright morning in February purchased, at an auction, a number of old paintings, comprising Titians, Raphaels, Murillos, Guercinos, and what not. In the dealer's phrase, they were good "furniture pictures," and I was not a little proud of my acquisitions, till Lord Buchan assured me that he knew the lot quite well; that my only competitor at the sale had been the proprietor, who wished to entrap a green-horn; finally, that the whole might have been purchased privately for less than one-half what I had paid.

Of Lord Buchan, thus revived, I cannot forbear tracing a few more remembrances. His lordship was really good-tempered, well-meaning, and kind-hearted, after his own queer fashion, exhibiting

the strangest compound I have ever known of learning and talents, with wayward vanity and eccentricity. In so far as talents depend (as it has been in some cases) on vivacity, restlessness, and genial spirits, his lordship was superbly gifted. He really enjoyed his own life, was so pre-eminently happy, so busy and so buoyant in his own world of dreams, whimsicalities, and fancies, that it seemed to me cruel and unchristian-like to disparage his movements. Like Monboddo, he might be said to live an austere life; that is, he rose very early, went out in all weathers, despised luxury in his own *ménage*, and was perpetually at work, or on the alert, from six in the morning till twelve at night—eighteen hours out of the twenty-four. But, alas! his lordship's works did not turn to much account in fame or profit, and his vivacity was too great in its degree. As Lord Kinnedder said, he was afflicted with an incapacity of sitting quietly on his chair, and his great resource in town was to run from house to house, where his conversation always revolved on two general heads—namely, his own grand schemes, and his own superiority, on all points, over all the world.

But our Edinburgh world (in classical phrase) would not stand this, for their *amour propre* was wounded, so his lordship was brought into a state

of antagonism with the said world, for which of course I honoured him. Again he set all ordinary conventions and conventionalities at defiance, for which, most especially, I honoured him; and so far was this carried that I doubt whether he could properly be called vain; for how can a man be consistently styled so, if, with his eyes open, and avowedly, he tramples on all those precautions and arts which are necessary, in order to build up and conserve reputation? At this moment, I am persuaded that his lordship always believed himself in the right, and therefore persisted in his course, regardless utterly of what a stupid thankless world might say. *Selon moi*, he had the firmest confidence in the value of his own counsels on all matters, moral, political, and even religious. He believed that the crown and constitution of Britain would be endangered if he withdrew his smiles and his counsels from the king and royal family, to whom he frequently addressed epistolary communications, which were kindly acknowledged, usually in the hand-writing of some one of the royal princesses. Moreover, he believed firmly that among the literary men and artists, whom he favoured with his patronage, not one could move successfully without his paternal care. They were all regarded by him as so many aspirants, docile or wayward as the case might be, looking or

bound to look to their Magnus Apollo for guidance and inspiration.

And now I shall add a brief anecdote, which, though in one sense of no importance whatever, has at least this peculiarity, that, though literally true, it is quite as extraordinary as any of the marvels which Lord Buchan was in the habit of attesting. At London, in the year 1835 or 1836, I went as an utter stranger to the house of Mr. Uppcott, the late celebrated collector of autographs, who then lived in frugal retirement at Islington. My purpose was to submit the plan of a literary work, and ask whether he would add his name to the list of its supporters. Mr. Uppcott himself, with a sheaf of papers in his hand, opened the door. I tendered him my visiting card, adding that, as I called without special introduction, it was my duty to retire, if he happened to be then particularly occupied. He replied very courteously that my name alone was a sufficient introduction; then, leading the way to his study, he said: "My occupation to-day is this; I have, within the last three minutes, opened for the first time the largest box of Lord Buchan's papers, which I purchased from Dr. Anderson's executors at Edinburgh. Perhaps you knew his lordship?"

I answered that I had known him familiarly for many years. "Then," says Mr. Uppcott, "we

shall look together at a document which I found lying uppermost, and which, from the docket, appears to be a sort of literary testament respecting the manner in which Lord Buchan wished these manuscripts to be disposed of." He began rapidly to read aloud, and had not got through the first page, when, after a deal of *other* eccentricities, he came to the passage; "the gentleman whom I would prefer for my literary executor is Mr. Robert Pearse Gillies, Advocate, formerly of Balmakewan in Kincardineshire." Mr. Uppcott dropped the paper in his utter amazement. That the individual thus named, who had not heard one word of the earl or his papers for at least twelve long years, and had not even dreamed of either, should suddenly appear in the house of a stranger the very instant when the sacred *repertorium* was first opened, and be ready to answer to his name on the deceased dignitary's call, was an accident so unexampled that it might well be classed with the supernatural. Swedenborg or Jung Stilling would no doubt have said that Lord Buchan himself was present on the field, and had guided my steps on that occasion, though I heard no warning voice, nor beheld any shadowy form.

But, alas, like many other strange events, and like divers performances of so-styled ghosts in our world, all this led to nothing. The said Mr.

R. P. Gillies was indeed the same individual, but now in a very different phasis; *la force de circonstances*, and the load imposed by dear-bought experience, weighed too heavily on him. Mr. Uppcott, however, had a meeting that same day with Mr. Colburn, about disposal of the papers, and communicated to him the strange event of the morning, whereat the great publisher was equally struck. But, as above said, and in the words of Dr. Johnson, about another ghost, "nothing came of it." The earl's papers, I presume, were found impracticable for publication, so that a literary executor, except it had been one with a full purse ready to run all risks, could never be called into action. By another extraordinary chance, though *almost* all my valuable papers are lost, some of his lordship's numerous letters yet remain in my possession, from which I here select two of the shortest as a memorial of our long acquaintance.

"Edinburgh, March 14, 1812.

"Dear Gillies,—I have begun my series of selections from my anonymous papers in periodical works, from Bowyer's 'Gentleman's Magazine,' near fifty years ago, to the present time, and I regret your absence from Edinburgh, because I think you would have delighted to assist me in this and

other literary undertakings. Do persuade your mother to accompany you as formerly to the Caledonian Athens. The season of Folly is over and gone, and the voice of the Lyre is heard in our land. Arise then, my friend, and come away! Farewell! "BUCHAN."

"Edinburgh, March 28, 1812.

"My dear Gillies,—I have begun to print my anonymous and fugitive essays at my own press in Merchant Court. I begin with those of 'Anderson's Miscellany,' in the years 1790-1-2-4. I shall then proceed to those inserted in 'Sibbald's Magazine,' in the 'Edinburgh Magazine,' and in still later publications; last of all I shall give part of my *Commercium epistolicum literarium*. What a pleasant thing for you, and how *sanative* it would be for you to come here immediately to superintend the press! A thousand melancholy sonnets would never tend so much to preserve your memory as such a pious undertaking. Come then, dear Gillies, and farewell.

"'Arise, or be for ever lost.'

"Your assured friend,

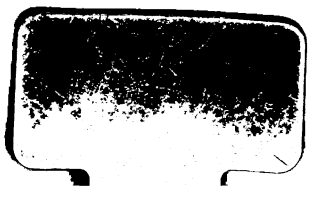
"BUCHAN."

Warned as I have been against my slow progress, and as my publisher expects that these memoirs

may be wound up within another month, I shall cut short my *notanda* of this winter, only adding that the return of spring was to me a most welcome event, and that I gladly bade adieu to the stone walls and iron bars of Edinburgh, to revisit green fields and budding trees in the north.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON :
Printed by SAMUEL BENTLEY and Co.,
Bangor House, Shoe Lane.



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